Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party October 1976 30 pence

Editorial Comments

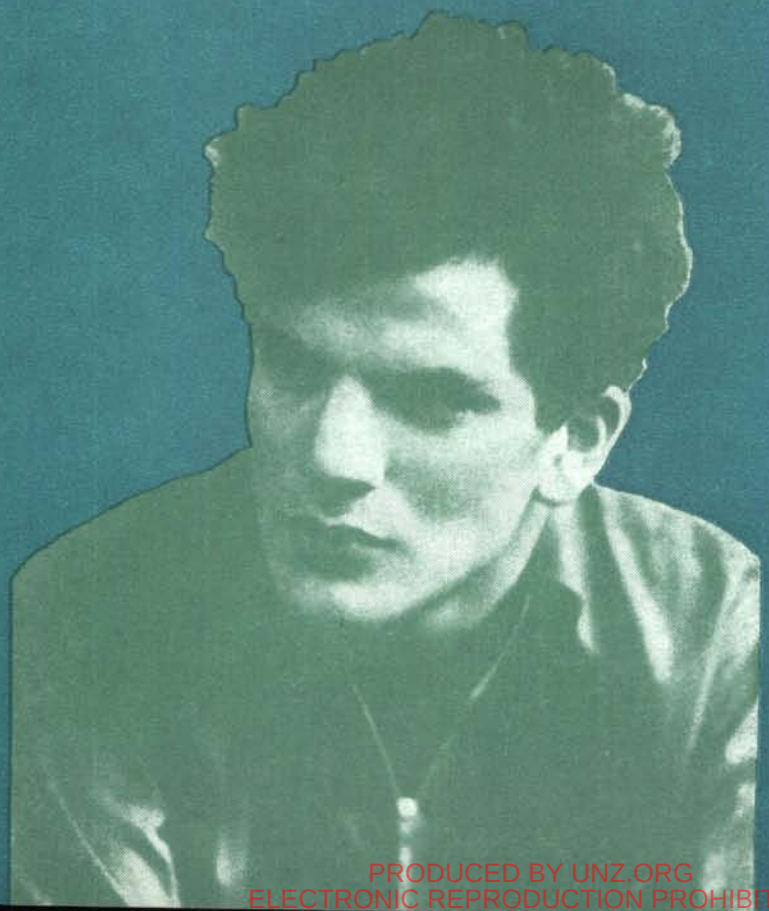
Jon Bloomfield — **A Strategy for Democratic Post-School Education**

David Purdy — **British Capitalism since the War Part Two—Decline and Prospects**

David Triesman — Sociology—but not Marxism

Discussion:

Les Howey
Digby Jacks
Monty Johnstone — *Socialist Democracy: Some Problems*



John Cornford Communist Student Leader of the early '30s, poet, killed in Spain in 1936 as a member of the International Brigade

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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

Volume 20, Number 10

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The front cover was designed by Pat Cook

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Editorial Comments

WITH the issue of volumes 5 and 6, the publication by Lawrence & Wishart of the Collected Works of Marx and Engels has now got into stride.[1]

Both volumes contain texts which have previously appeared in English but which have now been thoroughly revised and amended, along with many others in English for the first time.

Both contain some of the seminal works of Marxism, written in opposition to the ideas of petty-bourgeois writers and philosophers, but also as part of the process of 'self-clarification' essential to the full development of a scientific socialist approach.

Volume 5 contains *Marx's Theses on Feuerbach* and the joint work—*The German Ideology*. In both of these works the main principles of historical materialism are elaborated and the relationship between 'interpreting' and 'changing' the world.

In *The German Ideology* the concepts of 'productive forces' and 'relations of production' are first introduced, their general relationship to classes and class struggle and to the process of historical and social change. Concepts like 'basis and superstructure', 'social consciousness' and its roots, the nature and role of the state, are developed and discussed.

The development of the working class movement to the stage of recognition of the need for a revolutionary party (expressed in the formation of the Communist League in 1847), the imminent bourgeois revolutions in Europe, the fight of oppressed European nations for national independence form the background to most of the 63 texts which make up Volume 6.

Amongst the most important are *The Poverty of Philosophy* (in which Marx criticises the ideas of Proudhon); a lecture by Marx on *Wages* (delivered to the German Workers' Society in Brussels); Engels' two statements on the aims of communists—*Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith* and *Principles of Communism* (Engels' draft for the *Communist Manifesto*); the Manifesto itself; and many articles by Engels on the Chartist Movement, developments in Britain, the situation in Austria, Ireland, Poland and other countries.

A lengthy section at the end of Volume 6—entitled *From the Preparatory Materials*—contains original drafts of parts of the *Manifesto* and Appendices including reports of the speeches of Marx and Engels at international conferences in London and Brussels, the Rules of the Communist League, a Circular issued at the League's first Congress, Minutes of its various sections.

Now that the first six volumes have been issued and the translation for many successive volumes has been completed, given the modest price of the volumes and the scholarship involved in translations, indexes and explanatory notes, the case has become extremely strong for purchasing the volumes as they appear and building up a full collection of the works of Marx and Engels.

A CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE SPANISH COMMUNIST PARTY

At a Rome press conference on July 31 Santiago Carrillo, General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party, described the decisions of the Party's Central Committee, which had just concluded its sessions.

The C.C, he said, had examined the means to transform the organisation into a great mass Party. Their aim was a membership of 300,000 even before coming out of illegality. From the type of organisation which several decades of illegality had imposed on it, the Party aimed at passing to the creation of large associations of communists at work-places, places of study and in localities.

These 'associations' would replace the old 'cell structure' which in the present conditions of Spain evoked a 'closed' and 'secret' organisation. They would hold public assemblies in the course of which political and organisation questions would be openly debated.

[1] Marx and Engels—*Collected Works*—Volume 5, *Marx and Engels 1845-1847*; Volume 6, *1845-1848*, Lawrence & Wishart, Each volume £3.00.

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With this perspective of march towards liberty the Central Committee had studied "the means of achieving democratic functioning at all levels and decided to increase the number of its members". Henceforth the Central Committee would have 142 and the Executive Committee 36 members.

The new C.C. consists of 57 workers, 6 agricultural and 22 clerical workers, 54 intellectuals, artists and members of liberal professions; of these 68 are less than 45 years old. Many had passed years in Franco's prisons, indeed between them 485 years. Seven members of the C.C. had been condemned to death and had their sentence commuted to imprisonment.

DEATH OF MAURICE DOBB

The death of Maurice Dobb is a grievous loss to the Editorial Board of *Marxism Today*. He served on it from the formation of our journal nearly 20 years ago. He was a regular contributor and, even when he could no longer attend our meetings, he actively participated in our work. He was a foundation member of the Communist Party and was proud of his Party membership until he died.

When he retired from the post of Reader in the University of Cambridge in the summer of 1967 we made our August (1967) issue a Tribute to his work. J. R. Campbell wrote of him as "Communist, Economist, Historian"; Eric Hobsbawm discussed his writings in the field of history, whilst Ron Bellamy and John Eaton wrote of his achievements in political economy. A special tribute came from communists of the town and University of Cambridge.

We can all join with the words spoken by the economist John Eatwell at Maurice Dobb's funeral:

> "Maurice Dobb was without doubt the leading Marxist scholar in England, and one of the leading scholars of the world. His intellectual legacy in books and papers, both academic and popular is enormous. He made contributions to economic theory, the history of economic thought, development economics and to economic history.
>
> "Perhaps his most important work in economic theory was his book *Political Economy and Capitalism* of 1937. This was the culmination of nearly two decades of work devoted to the re-establishment of a scientific analysis of capitalism, to convincing Marxists of the importance of scientific standards, and to convincing academic economists of the importance of Marxism. The significance of this book is probably only now being fully appreciated. . . .
>
> "A quite different work was his *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* of 1946, which inspired a major historical debate on the interpretation of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. . . ."

As we forecast in these Editorial columns in August 1967, Maurice's "retirement" was something of a formality. He continued to work almost to the day of his death.

Dobb, we wrote then as we would write today, was a communist as well as an economist. He was not just a learned historian of capitalism and an erudite economic investigator of its nature, but he spent most of his life fighting against it. He was as interested in its end as in its origins. He was a sociologist before sociology became a fashion, and from his student days a pioneer in the serious study of socialist society.

When we wrote in 1967 we had just found a little book, published by Heffer in 1920, under the title of *Demosthenes Demoblised*, a record of Cambridge Union debates in the 1919-20 period. "The best of the younger speakers" was its verdict on Dobb—"one of the clearest thinkers in the House".

Clarity of thought and simplicity of expression was always his style. He used specialist language where it was required but remained all his life an enemy of jargon.

All who knew him comment on his modesty, which is not by any means a virtue that always accompanies Marxism. He was a man of principle who detested dogmatism. "There can rarely have been one," we wrote in 1967 "who, knowing so much, proffered his opinions with such humility, who was so patient with those who could or would not understand, nor so helpful and encouraging to those who were just beginning."

His work was recognised throughout the world. If he had not been so firm in his principle he would certainly have retired from much more senior positions.

Comrades Longo and Berlinguer of the Italian Communist Party, comrade Rajeswara Rao, General Secretary of the Indian Communist Party, and many others sent telegrams of condolence. The secretariat of the French Communist Party, transmitting its deep-felt condolences, wrote that Maurice Dobb "devoted his life to enriching Marxist economic science. Untiring researcher and academic of international fame, he left an important contribution to the Marxist study of the capitalist system".

We shall all miss him deeply, but his example, as one who managed so well to blend profound theoretical learning with a principled record of practice and a modest, generous, human, communist way of life, will long remain.

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THE NEW EDITORIAL BOARD OF "MARXISM TODAY"

With the death of John Mahon and Maurice Dobb the Editorial Board of *Marxism Today* lost two outstanding members. Two other members who long and generously served the Board—Maurice Cornforth and Alan Morton—have asked to retire from it, though they will continue to co-operate with the work of our journal. Tony Chater, as Editor of the *Morning Star*, can no longer accept the responsibilities of Board membership.

The newly constituted Board of *Marxism Today* is composed as follows: Irene Brennan, Gabriel Carritt, Jack Cohen, John Foster, John Gollan, Alan Hunt, Arnold Kettle, James Klugmann (editor), Betty Matthews, Tony McLelland, Bert Pearce, Dave Priscott, Michael Seifert, Sue Slipman, George Wake, Nick Wright, Dave Wynn.

After the first meeting of the Board we shall put forward our plans and proposals for the consideration of our readers. Meanwhile every suggestion for our future work would be gratefully received.

UNDERSTAND THE WEAPON, UNDERSTAND THE WOUND

Forgive me if I relapse for a moment from our usual editorial impersonality to a more personal note in thanking the Carcanet Press for making available again a selection of the writings of John Cornford, most of which have been unavailable since Pat Sloan edited *John Cornford: A Memoir* in 1938[4].

John's poems are divided into three (chronological) sections—school (Stowe), University (Cambridge) and Spain. They are followed by essays taken mainly from the student papers of the early thirties like *Student Vanguard* and *Cambridge Left* and letters, many from school to his mother, the poet Frances Cornford, and the four last ones written to Margot Heinemann from Spain.

John's letters from school show that he had moved much further than most of the public school rebels of the early thirties. Already he had began to pass from the stage of rebel against the old society to that of a revolutionary with a sense of the society he wished to build.

I was with John joint-organiser of the Cambridge University Branch of the Communist Party in the period when some of the poems and many of the essays were written. There had been revolutionary students *as individuals*, or in very small groups, in the universities throughout the twenties, but this was the period (1933-35) when the influence of Marxism rapidly spread, when Marxist students organised and began to see the need and possibility of winning a majority of students against reaction. No more were the students to be the scabs of the General Strike of 1926, they were to be won to the side of the working class.

One of John's essays describes the background in which this student movement was built—dangers of war, growth of fascism, acute economic crisis which led to considerable student unemployment and misemployment (there was the graduate with first-class honours in Zoology who ended up as a municipal ratcatcher), the success of the first five year plan in the Soviet Union standing out in relief against our Western "poverty in plenty", the impact of the great Soviet revolutionary films.

One of the factors that brought many of us to Marxism was the reflection on the character and content of what we were being taught of the general crisis of capitalism, the economic and social effects of which shouted their presence.

We began to examine and criticise our teaching in detail and John's "Notes on the Teaching of History at Cambridge" are very revealing. "Counter-teaching" began and often hundreds would attend discussions on "Marxism and History", "Marxism and Science" or faculty discussions of subjects under study.

In the excitement of the discovery of a new and revolutionary way of looking at all things, a new purpose, we were many of us deeply sectarian, we wanted a complete break, and at once, an instant revolution. Our contact with the working class movement, with the Hunger Marchers, strikers, Communist Party leaders like Willy Gallacher, for instance (whose visit to Cambridge in this period and discussions with our Branch helped us to see that students as such, not just as individuals, had much to give to the struggle for socialism, that revolutionary students should study) tempered this sectarianism.

This sense of the working class became increasingly apparent in John Cornford's writings and in his life. One of the great days in the history of the Cambridge University Branch of the Party was the meeting with the Hunger Marchers as they passed through the town. Students rallied in support of the

[4] *Understand the Weapon, Understand the Wound: Selected Writings of John Cornford*, edited by John Galassi, Carcanet Press, 1976, £3.90.

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Cambridge busmen. They marched side by side with workers against Mosley. We learned that from the working class we had very much to learn that was not in books.

The Seventh Congress of the Communist International, in particular the contributions of Dimitrov and Ercoli (Togliatti), deeply influenced us, helped to move us out of the worst of our sectarianism—whether in our attitudes to the Labour Party, to our fellow non-Marxist opponents of war and fascism, or to our fellow students in general. Thoughts of the Seventh Congress filled John's mind before Huesca.

Margot Heinemann writes in the November *Marxism Today* about the "myth of the thirties". It is sad that so much of the vast volume of "thirties studies" should be so useless—some just red baiting, some confusing fringe-effects and essence, some old men and women, tired and ashamed, attempting to belittle, denigrate, purge their own past or to sell for cash what they have long since denied.

There have been attempts to drag John into this mythology. "The Communist Party forced him to go to Spain" or "The Communist Party should have prevented the future poet, historian, great intellectual, from risking his precious life in the Spanish struggle".

But for John like many of his generation fighting in Spain was but a logical step in his passage from rebel to revolutionary.

In those days Cambridge Communists were organised into college branches. Four former members of the Trinity College Branch fought in the International Brigade of whom three (including John) were killed.

Life for John Cornford as a Marxist was very precious—his personal love, his poetry, politics, history, passionate interest in things theoretical—but just because life could mean so much it was necessary to defend it.

It was good to be alive in those days, not least because, after the complex, inturned, tormented days of the twenties, intellectuals were discovering a cause worth living, and, if necessary, dying for.

"DOCUMENTS" TO COME

We publish from time to time in *Marxism Today* under the general rubric of 'Documents' important articles, reports, statements, resolutions from our brother parties or other progressive organisations. This does not mean that we agree with everything that is contained in them, but that we consider them important and of interest to our readers.

Over the period of the next months, we hope to publish a number of such documents on important questions under discussion in the international communist movement related to the transition to socialism, socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Amongst those which we hope, if space permits (and this is an increasing problem), to make available are:

Lucien Sève's article (published in the June 1976 *Cahiers du Communisme*) on "*The 22nd Congress of the CPF and the Leninist Development of the Strategy of Peaceful Revolutions*".

An article by Gian Carlo Pajetta of the leadership of the Italian Communist Party—"For Socialism in Europe"—published in the November 11, 1975 issue of *Rinascita*.

The full text of the *Joint Declaration of the Italian and French Communist Parties* of November 15, 1975.

The Report on *Leninism: Science and Art of Revolutionary Creative Effort* delivered by Yuri Andropov at the Celebration Meeting on April 22, 1976, dedicated to the 106th Anniversary of Lenin's birth.

Extracts from the long study by Tetsuzo Fuwa, Chief of the Secretariat of the Japanese Communist Party, entitled *Scientific Socialism and the Question of Dictatura: A Study of Marx and Engels*, which was published in *Akahata* between April 27—May 8 of this year and deals with the conceptions of political power and the dictatorship of the proletariat in the writings of Marx and Engels.

A study by Etienne Balibar on the *Dictatorship of the Proletariat* based on a lecture given at the CERM (Centre of Marxist Study and Research) earlier this year as part of a series of lectures on the state.

FORTHCOMING IN FRANCE

"Editions Sociales", the publishing house of the French Communist Party, has issued an exciting list of books to be published over the next months.[5]

A group of historians of the Maurice Thorez Institute have prepared a two-volume "History of Reformism in France since 1920" which is now at the printers (*Histoire du Réformisme en France depuis 1920*).

Another composite book, also in preparation, is a study of "French Imperialism

[5] "Editions Sociales", 146 rue du Faubourg-Poissonière, Paris 10e.

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Today" (*l'Impérialisme français Aujourd'hui*) based on study days held by the International Department of the French Communist Party at the end of May this year.

Under the title of "Communists and Christians" a book has been compiled of statements of French Communist leaders from the famous speech of Maurice Thorez on the policy of *main tendue* (hand extended) in 1936 to the statement of Georges Marchais at Lyons in June of this year.

For those who can read French and not Italian the Editions Sociales is publishing a translation of "The Policy of the Italian Communist Party", based on the interview of the British Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm with the leading Italian Communist Giorgio Napolitano.

Under the title of "Algeria, Birth of a New Society", the full text will be printed of the "National Charter" of the Algerian people made public on June 27, 1976.

Amongst the most interesting works under preparation in the field of Marxist theory is a study by Pierre Jaegle on the marxist approach to the concepts of space and time (*Essai sur L'Espace et le Temps*). The author is a physicist, research worker at the CNRS (National Centre of Scientific Research), a specialist in atomic physics who, in recent years, has collaborated with the Centre of Marxist Study and Research on questions of the relations between science and philosophy.

Students of psychology will welcome the publication of a selection of the writings of Henri Wallon (*Lecture d'Henri Wallon: Choix de Textes*), well known for his role in the development of psychology in France especially in the field of child psychology. Wallon all his life was a very political man, already in the 1930s one of the foremost intellectual anti-fascists. "All science," he once wrote, "whatever its object, has close relationships with the social system in which it develops. Clearsighted scientists, therefore, should also devote themselves to the political realities in which they live".

This is only a short selection from the Editions Sociales' fascinating list.

WHAT KIND OF SOCIALISM?

The Cultural Committee of the Communist Party (now divided into the Theory and Ideology Committee and the Arts and Leisure Committee) is organising four days of discussion—from October 28—31—under the general title of *What Kind of Socialism for Britain?*

The opening event will be a general session on the Thursday evening (October 28) when a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party and a *Tribune MP* will lead the discussion on "*The Transition to Socialism*".

The Friday evening, all day Saturday and Sunday morning will be devoted to smaller discussion groups on specific aspects of socialist society, looking, for example, at the scope for self-management at the workplace and the role of central planning; the priorities of policy in a socialist educational system; human relationships and the role of the family; the control and use of the media.

The four-day discussions close with a Sunday afternoon session (October 31) on "People, Parties and State" with speakers from the Italian Communist Party, the Socialist Unity Party of the German Democratic Republic and the British Communist Party.

The meetings will be held at Imperial College Students Union.[6]

CONFERENCE ON CLASS AND CLASS STRUCTURE

As previously announced *Marxism Today* and the Communist Party Sociology Group have organised a weekend conference on "Class and Class Structure" to be held on November 27-28. The speakers at the conference will include: Nicos Poulantzas, author of "Classes in Contemporary Capitalism"; John Westergaard, author of "Class in a Capitalist Society"; Vic Allen, specialist on trade unionism and author of "Social Analysis"; Paul Hirst, co-author of "Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production"; Stuart Hall, Director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and Alan Hunt of the Communist Party Sociology Group.

The conference will focus on two main problems. First, the question of how classes are to be identified and defined, and the political issues that flow from this discussion. The second topic of discussion and controversy will concern itself with 'the new working class'. Are the ever-increasing number of clerical, technical, commercial and administrative employees part of the working class, or are they a 'new petty bourgeois class'?

For full details of registration see the advertisement on the back cover.

[6] Further information and registration can be obtained from 16 King Street, London, WC2.

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A Strategy for Democratic Post-School Education

Jon Bloomfield

(The author is National Student Organiser of the Communist Party)

The political capacity of the socialist movement is registered not only by its involvement in day-to-day campaigns and struggles but also, and ultimately more important, by its ability to give direction and coherence to these struggles both in particular fields and more generally. The accusation is often thrown at the left that it knows what it is against rather better than knowing what it stands for. This can lead to particular campaigns being waged in a defensive context with the left alternative presented in terms of general slogans, as is a danger in the present fight against education cuts. In the long run, this type of approach can only gain limited results, since it lacks the creative dimension essential to any strategy seeking a fundamental alteration in the balance of class forces in society. To an extent, this dimension has been lacking from the left's approach to post-school education. This article seeks to tackle this question by locating the main characteristics of post-school education and outlining a strategy for its fundamental democratisation. This process cannot be viewed as occurring in isolation. It would inevitably be linked to similar movements in other fields. It is tied in with the Communist Party's conception of a broad, popular alliance, electing a Labour government with a programme to alter the balance of wealth and power in the country decisively in favour of working people. This article will concentrate on post-school education, however.

HOW DOES THE RULING CLASS RULE?

To begin it is necessary to situate post-school education within a broader social context and in particular in relation to the character of ruling-class rule. Marxists recognise that the character of class rule varies over time and place, usually in consequence of earlier class struggles. But in all forms of class rule, the two central elements to consider are those of coercion and consent. These two elements have a different proportionate weight under different forms of class rule. One of the clearest examples here is the qualitative difference between fascism and bourgeois democracy, with the use of force being clearly dominant in fascist countries. Yet neither element is ever absent. What is crucial to grasp in considering the character of ruling-class rule is the specific relation between coercion and consent and the determination of which element is primary.

In Britain today, the maintenance of state monopoly capitalism is ensured primarily by the consent and acceptance, often passive or grudging, of the mass of the people. Like the school system, post-school education plays an important part in securing this consent from a sizeable sector of young people. The contrast with military dictatorships is sharp. In Pinochet's Chile, the element of coercion dominates university and polytechnic life, just as happened in Greece under the military junta. Rectors are state-appointed; staff are vetted and dismissed on political, not professional, grounds; students and staff are unable to organise autonomous, independent unions; the content of courses is strictly controlled and state-directed, while Marxism is banned and Marxist books burnt. This contrasts with the situation in Britain and most of capitalist Europe, where acceptance of the 'status quo' is generated primarily from within the institutions themselves. This is not to deny that administrative means are sometimes employed as with the sacking of teaching staff (e.g. Blackburn, Atkinson and the attempt on Craig), while in West Germany at the moment several regional governments are operating a ban on the employment of left-wingers and radicals in teaching and other professions. Yet the element of consent predominates in general.

THE ROLE OF POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION

A number of major aspects of post-school education can be identified. Firstly, the transmission of non-vocational knowledge within a particular ideological framework which serves to perpetuate existing social relations. Secondly, the construction of new knowledge via research within that same framework. Thirdly, the training of various types of intellectuals for positions of leadership and authority in the main spheres of state and civil society,[1] such as the army, judiciary,

[1] A concept of the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci referring to the web of institutions, e.g. trade unions, political parties, schools, family, church, press, central to the functioning of society and the generation of ruling-class hegemony.

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church, media and civil service. Fourthly, the training and reproduction of a large body of technical, scientific and administrative wage-labour.[2]

The relative importance of each of these functions has altered over time. Most striking has been the qualitative increase in the significance of the latter since the end of the war. The exercise of these functions has been the responsibility of particular institutions within the system of post-school education. Thus universities originally fulfilled the first three functions, although the period after the Robbins report (1963) saw them take on somewhat uneasily the fourth area. Subsequently, successive governments have sought to promote the polytechnics as the institutions primarily responsible for this task of training technical and administrative wage-labour on a large scale, with technical colleges in a subsidiary role. This has been done in the belief that expansion of the polytechnic sector is cheaper than the universities and also that the obstacles of the 'liberal' university era—academic freedom, autonomy, non-vocational education, etc.—are better by-passed rather than confronted. Until the present set of mergers, the responsibility for the training of teachers lay with the colleges of education, while specialist areas such as law and medicine developed their own institutions and restrictive entry patterns.

To analyse its role and institutions in this way is not to view post-school education onesidedly. Many of its characteristics of learning and scholarship have great value, even if restricted in its present context. One of the effects of the recent expansion—the number of full-time students rose by over 250,000 between 1963 and 1973—has been a growing interconnection between technical and vocational education, particularly in the polytechnics and some newer universities. This has begun to overcome the limitations of the 'liberal' university. The culture, ethos and traditions of the 'liberal' university, integral to its social role, have encouraged the separation of theory and practice. A frequent mistake on the left has been blindly to follow that path and to refuse to relate education to the economy *in any way*. Only if this question is considered can the positive aspects of the combination of technical and vocational education be seen and its potential understood.

FULFILMENT OF THIS ROLE

Despite the variety of institutions which compose the system of post-school education, there are certain general features which characterise post-school education in this country. These have been modified over a period and in consequence of particular political and sectional campaigns. Yet the major characteristics I isolate below are essential to the existing purposes of post-school education and the production of a stable force of intellectuals and technicians.

1. Entry Procedures

Restrictive access to post-school education remains an important feature. The class bias which exists against working-class children at all stages of education is especially marked at this level. Despite the enormous expansion, the percentage of "students from working-class families has remained more or less static for several decades, at a proportion of much less than half of those from higher income groups",[3] although upper-class values no longer dominate universities and colleges as they once did.

This insulation from working-class life and experience is compounded by the absence of mature students from most institutions. Universities and colleges are havens of the young, usually students straight from school or with a few months' work prior to going to college. For people who have been at work for a considerable period, there are relatively limited opportunities to become full-time students, although the recent provision of mandatory grant awards to students attending adult residential colleges is welcome. The establishment of the Open University has provided another important channel for further education for working people, yet full-time, post-school education retains its distinctive youthful character, with many people who could benefit from it being effectively barred.

Another barrier to access is faced by women. The discrimination practised against them in many fields of social life is also found in education at this level. A considerably smaller percentage of girls carry on with full-time study after school as compared with boys, in 1971 29.7 per cent of university students, while the proportion studying mathematics, engineering and the physical sciences is extremely small.[4]

2. Organisation of Institutions

In both their internal and external organisation, the overwhelming majority of universities, polytechnics and colleges are hierarchical and undemocratic.

[2] See M. Jacques—*Universities and Capitalism, Marxism Today*, July 1975.

[3] Edwards & Allen, THES, 30.7.76.

[4] For further on this see S. Slipman—*Women in Education and the Student Movement, Marxism Today*, December 1975. M. Rendel—*Men and Women in Higher Education*, Education Review, June 1975. *Staff Development in Universities Programme 1974* (Women in Higher Education Conference).

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It is true that on a wide range of teaching matters the staff in a department have a large degree of flexibility. However, professors and department heads often wield a considerable degree of power within individual faculties. A more general trend within many institutions is to concentrate power in the hands of a central, governing body and a group of senior administrators. This has been a hallmark of the recent disputes at Essex University, Lancaster University and North London Polytechnic; it is evident in the new statutes of Oxford and Cambridge Universities; and it is at the core of the proposals of the Murray Report for the reorganisation of London University with centralised planning and decision-making.[5]

The crucial decision-making bodies are becoming increasingly remote from the bulk of the teaching staff. This experience is not new to students. Until the late 1960s there was barely any representation of student interests on the main policy-making committees. As a result of the many campaigns waged in the late 1960s, often under the dynamic, if sometimes blurred, slogan of 'student power', the principle of student representation on these committees was often conceded, although usually only a token number of places were given. As yet there is hardly an institution where students have a sizeable representation, e.g. a third, while authorities frequently oppose the principle that these student representatives are specifically accountable to their constituency, the student body and its union.

Undoubtedly they fear that this principle might be extended to academic and non-academic staff. Recently, statements by the Committee of Vice-chancellors and Principals and the Committee of Polytechnic Directors were leaked to the press,[6] in which they declared their resolute opposition to ancillary staff members being on senate and council bodies, if nominated by staff trade unions. These statements are further confirmation of the desire of the university and polytechnic authorities to retain the existing authoritarian and undemocratic power structures within their institutions.

This pattern is reproduced in their external relations. Trade unions and community organisations are rarely involved in the maintenance and development of these institutions. This provides a stark contrast with the involvement of state organs and big business on the key boards or as the sponsors of academic projects. The involvement of major firms in many newer universities was dramatically highlighted by the events at Warwick University in 1970. Student disputes at Lancaster and Stirling have similarly cast light on business influence on university life, although the position in the older, 'redbrick' universities is more complex. Sponsorship of projects by firms is a cheap method of research, while the Ministry of Defence is not averse to using university research laboratories for its own projects.

[5] See THES, 16.7.76.

[6] See THES, 18.6.76.

3. Individualism and Competitiveness

The way by which skills are measured in a capitalist society and the nature of its social relations encourage a definite process of learning. Its major features are its authoritarianism—the teacher-taught relationship; its passivity—students receive knowledge from listening to the lecturer; its individualism—the main form of work is essay writing or the solving of problems; and its competitiveness, exemplified by regular examinations with graded results.

To say this is not to slip into the libertarian trap and argue that learning is a spontaneous process, in which guidance and direction are unnecessary. There are more collective approaches to the acquisition of skills, yet these challenge another major characteristic of a competitive process. For an individualistic and competitive approach divides students and hinders academic and social solidarity. (Two heads really are better than one.) Its main material effect is to keep medical staff fully occupied proscribing sedatives to students prior to examinations! Its ideological ramifications are more far-reaching.

4. Content of Study

Given that the transmission and extension of knowledge within a given ideological framework forms one of the primary purposes of post-school education, it is not surprising that theories and views which transcend or challenge this framework are rarely presented. This failure to present all major trends of thought in a subject has contributed to the sterility and prevalent cynicism of much academic thought. In this content it is no wonder that many students find their work boring and without stimulation.

For many years Marxism and Marxist approaches were patently ignored. Where Marxism was given a hearing it was usually treated as either an historic curiosity or an empty dogma. However, the increasing disarray of bourgeois thought, especially in the social sciences, combined with a renewal within Marxism, shedding many of the deformations of the Stalin period, is making this position swiftly untenable. The growing influence of Marxism amongst an increasing minority of academics is another factor here. Overall, however, a Marxist approach to a subject is infrequently taught in British universities and

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colleges, still more rarely from an informed viewpoint.

STRATEGY FOR A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM

The four main features I have specified here are the class, age and sex bias of the entry procedures; the undemocratic character of the institutions; the emphasis on individualism and competitiveness in their educational methods; the discrimination against non-'orthodox' thought and against Marxism, which is the main potential challenger to the traditions of empirical and positivist thought which permeate and dominate academic thought and teaching in Britain. These features represent the main mechanisms in the process whereby the role of post-school education is fulfilled and through which the institutions of post-school education seek to secure the consent of each generation of students to the existing social framework.

An essential aspect of any left programme for democratic advance must be to challenge these features of post-school education because we have a different view of its purpose, potential and relation to the community. That is not to take an iconoclastic view. There is much to value and retain in terms of teaching, learning and traditions of research. Yet the thread running through any left programme must be the call for democratic ownership and control of the main spheres of productive and social life with the mass of the people involved and able to plan according to social requirements. This approach must inform the left's programme at all levels of education. As regards post-school education this democratic, popular conception would need to transform the four features delineated above in a way which would alter fundamentally the internal operation of universities, polytechnics and colleges and their relation to the rest of society.

The Movement So Far

It would not be unduly harsh to say that progress towards these goals has been limited. Sporadic campaigns have been waged but a coherent movement has never developed. Activity on the issue of entry procedures has been negligible and unfortunately it has only rarely been raised as a matter of importance. The late 1960s saw a considerable burst of activity on democratic issues, expressed in terms of 'student power', union autonomy and the fight for representation. Many sit-ins arose from disputes on these questions and some limited gains were secured. Undoubtedly these struggles have influenced the more generous, if still inadequate, representation which students have achieved in many polytechnics. The same period saw a revival of interest in Marxism sparked off by events in Vietnam and in France (May/June 1968). Accompanying this came the call for 'free universities' and 'red bases', slogans which rejected the possibility of transforming existing institutions. Not surprisingly the enthusiasm and potential of this period was swiftly dissipated by such unrealistic political initiatives and the failure by the Communist Party amongst others to provide alternatives.

During the early 1970s growing opposition was expressed to existing methods of teaching and assessment. Two major sit-ins occurred at Cambridge in support of reform proposals for the economics course, which were being rejected by the university authorities. The reform package, which included the abolition of grading in Part I and the introduction of a thesis option instead of orthodox examinations, sought to reduce the competitive character of the teaching and examination system. It was a similar desire that led to disputes in other colleges, e.g. Kent, York, Swansea, with examination boycotts and other protest action. While no nation-wide activity has developed, it is in this sphere that most progress has been made, with significant modifications to many teaching and assessment methods. The growing flexibility of methods employed compared with a decade ago is indicative of the potential impact of a strong democratic movement.

The question of the content of education has rarely become a mass movement issue, save in the case of the defence of left lecturers threatened with victimisation. The case of David Craig is the most significant here, since a sizeable movement of staff and students prevented the efforts of the administration at Lancaster University to suspend Craig, a Communist and literature lecturer, from his teaching post. Campaigns focusing on changes in course content, seeking to ensure that all significant theoretical trends in a given subject are properly taught, have been rare. No doubt this is a partial reflection of the dominant empiricist tradition. Nonetheless, there are increasing signs of dissatisfaction with that tradition. Left-wing journals are appearing in a number of disciplines, e.g. *Radical Philosophy, Bulletin of the Conference of Socialist Economists, Radical Science Journal*; there is a heavy demand for academic books written from a Marxist viewpoint, which explains the willingness of many bourgeois publishing houses to print them; and the phenomenal interest in the Communist University of London (1,075 registrations this summer compared with 282 in 1973) indicates the enormous potential for Marxist theoretical work among students and intellectuals. The cumulative effect of these developments has been to secure an important, if often precarious, foothold for Marxist, radical

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and feminist views within some departments.

THE WAY FORWARD

The clear need is to develop campaigning on these four areas within a strategic framework which welds them together into a concerted movement aimed at the fundamental transformation of post-school education. Obviously the generation and buoyancy of this democratic movement will partly depend on the general standing of the left in the country, although at the same time a powerful movement here would contribute to the overall strength of the left. Such a movement can only achieve its goals if every area of post-school education is radically democratised. Not all aspects of a democratic programme can be viewed in advance. Experience will throw up a rich variety of alternatives in a movement which will advance at uneven rates in different places. Below some of the prospects are considered.

1. Open Access

Entry procedures, based on non-academic or non-universal criteria, are a considerable block to opening access to post-school education to all who can benefit from it. The elimination of all procedures which perpetuate this situation are clearly required. Prominent examples here include the special examinations held by Oxford and Cambridge colleges, the 'closed' scholarships at Oxbridge colleges and the restrictive quotas placed on women in certain subjects such as medicine. Clearly the existence of a private sector in education is a major factor here and the abolition of public schools would remove this institutionalised privilege.

Closely related to the social composition of students is their economic position. The success of the student movement's campaign for an adequate, non-discriminatory grant system is important, not only for a student's standard of living, but also to ensure that inadequate finance is not a factor determining access to post-school education.

Alone, however, these steps are insufficient to overcome discrimination and to make access to post-school education a realisable objective for a working person rather than an exceptional effort. Further expansion along the principles outlined in the Robbins report would be a useful contribution, but as Labour's Programme for Britain 1976 correctly points out: "If higher education is to be opened up to the working community, the demand for places must not be estimated only in relation to numbers in the 18-plus age group, but must also allow for a considerable expansion in the number of adult students entering higher education institutions." This requires discussion to establish more appropriate entrance requirements and grants policies for mature students. In this regard extending the work of Open University is not only important for the immediate educational benefits it produces, but also because it contributes to an understanding that education is a life-long process and not one restricted to those under 25. Similarly it is necessary to consider how to overcome sex inequality and what measures can be taken to ensure that women students can study the many scientific and technical subjects which at present are heavily male-dominated.

2. Democratic Reform

The case for democratic change has been presented. The entire power relations of these educational institutions must be reformed, based on the principle that all those involved in the college/university must have significant influence on the major policy questions. The exact proportions of representation will vary, although student representation of one-third is by no means excessive, but the agreement on the principle is vital. Experience of authorities' resistance to token representation of students, let alone ancillary staff, suggests that advance here won't come easily.

Another issue that needs careful scrutiny is the role of professors and department heads who are placed on committees 'ex-officio' and exert a tremendous influence because of their academic position. For example, the Murray Report proposes 32 such places on a London University Senate of 111 members. These 'ex-officio' members are not representatives of anybody but themselves, although they often claim to speak in the interests of the 'academic community'. Their presence, and often predominance, on policy-making committees undermines the position of union representatives, and results in 'the professoriate' possessing undue influence. Measures to alter this situation would be an integral part of any process of democratisation. Any attempts to intervene by the Privy Council in its consideration of University Charters would be resisted.

This democratisation process cannot be confined just to these institutions' internal relations. Ensuring equal relations between educational institutions is important. The present binary division of post-school education between the universities and the 'public' sector is an institutionalised expression of inequality. This can only be overcome by a unified system of post-school education, accompanied by an improvement in facilities in all institutions. The current campaign which the left, along with nationalist forces, is waging in Scotland for the devolution of all post-school education to the new Assembly could be a major step forward and set an example to the rest of Britain. Obviously such major shifts in educational

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practice and organisation are not conjured out of thin air, but small-scale campaigns such as the opening of library, union, cultural and sports facilities to all students and staff in one city contribute to the demise of binary divisions and of the accompanying divisive ideology. Through sharing facilities, genuine economies in expenditure can also be achieved, but in a constructive fashion. This question also relates to the external relations of these institutions, for many of these facilities are under-used for long holiday periods and could be utilised through co-operation with local councils.[7]

At a more general level two aspects of these external relations need consideration. On the one hand the sponsorship and direction of courses and research by business firms has to be carefully scrutinised along with some types of state intervention, as with the Ministry of Defence. At the same time these institutions' relations to the general community require re-examination with local trade unions and mass and community organisations on their external boards and a curtailment of the influence of industrial and commercial enterprises. This is not to argue that there should be no connections with industry or commerce. However, it is important to ensure that 'The Business University' of Warwick does not become the norm. Alternatives can be created.

3. Course Organisation

Widely diverse teaching and assessment methods are employed throughout post-school education. Consequently, the demands which students (and some staff) have presented on these questions have themselves varied and will continue to do so. Demands which have been put forward and sometimes secured include reducing the competitive character of education by greater flexibility in examination structures and the elimination of grading in courses; enhancing a collective approach by permitting joint projects, introducing essay banks and extending seminars; ensuring that students have ample opportunity and time for acquiring a broad education by reducing the rote-learning and excessive work-load of some courses, notably engineering and natural sciences. Despite some progress here, there is tremendous scope for further advance. The achievement of a more collective approach would reduce the prevalent complementary features of many students' educational experience: the intense competitiveness combined with passivity, as students listen and accept what they are told and then regurgitate it in an examination.

[7] A point which is firmly stated in *Labour's Programme for Britain.*

4. A Change of Content

The most profound regenerative effect on post-school education would result from a change in course content, whereby all the major trends of thought in a subject were taught by those competent to do so. The implementation of this fundamentally democratic demand would jar academic teaching out of its complacent orthodoxy and instil in it a spirit of genuine, critical enquiry. More than any other measure this could inspire students and teaching staff in their work.

One of the immediate effects would be a sharp increase in the amount of teaching informed by Marxism, since this is the greatest gap at present in most syllabuses. However, many non-orthodox or radical trends of thought receive scant attention at the moment and merit serious consideration. Neo-Ricardianism in economics, structuralism in literature, urbanism in geography and architecture, views of alternative technology in technical and environmental subjects are just a few such trends of thought. The social nature and role of the physical and natural sciences must be taught as an integral part of these courses. Here the development of the Marxist tradition in which Bernal, Haldane and others played an important role would be beneficial.

Moves to overcome the arts/science divide and to connect aspects of the 'two cultures' are necessary. In many courses women's studies would provide a valuable new dimension. Communists, Marxists and socialists should be engaged in campaigns for the teaching of all these trends. This is not to say that we consider them all of equal weight or validity. Clearly we do not. However, the demand for their presence on courses corresponds to the democratic and educational requirements of students and academic staff and represents a central thread of any democratisation strategy.

In developing struggles on this issue it is important that counter-courses are seen in proper perspective. Students have organised these in many departments on an 'ad-hoc' basis and sometimes a few sympathetic junior staff have participated. Their primary value lies in enhancing the capacity of students to intervene within the official courses and to change them. To view them as alternatives to official courses is to place a self-imposed isolation on the left and to abdicate from the task of winning the majority of students and staff for change.

THE CONDUCT OF THE STRUGGLE

The themes outlined above are not seen as a blueprint for the future. Rather they are intended as a guide to the particular struggles that must be waged in pursuit of a system of post-school

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education that is democratic, popular and critical. While their implementation will be a prolonged process, there is not an educational institution in the country where these questions do not arise. Around them revolve the major contradictions of students' and academic life. The complacent attitude which the left has adopted to these questions up till now betrays a narrow outlook to academic and student politics and results in an inability to respond to the discontent and dissatisfaction which many students and teachers experience. This attitude must be overcome if the left is to present itself as a viable, political force inside education.

Co-operation between students and staff is an essential prerequisite for the specific application of this strategy to each university, polytechnic and college. Often this will begin at a departmental or faculty level, tackling the issues of representation, examinations, course content, etc. Whatever the difficulties, a joint approach is vital or at least an approach which the majority of teaching staff agree with. The populist pitfall of counterposing students to teachers can only frustrate the movement for structural reforms by dividing real and necessary allies.

New Organisational Forms

Arising from campaigns at a faculty level, new organisational forms emerge. For example, joint faculty boards have been established in many places or students have been granted representation on departmental committees. The question then arises—and will doubtless be posed more sharply in future—as to how are the student representatives chosen and to whom are they accountable. These faculty matters cannot be the responsibility of the entire student body and its union structure. Rather it necessitates the creation of student organisation at a faculty level with open meetings of all the students concerned to discuss the issues at hand, to elect their representatives. It is important that this new level of student organisation is integrated with the main student union structures and not separated from it since these matters are of primary concern to students. Their successful resolution can only be achieved with the full involvement and weight of the students' union. Here, it is interesting to note that student organisation on the Continent is based primarily on the faculties.

The integration of this sphere of activity, sometimes inadequately designated 'academic affairs', into the mainstream of student and staff politics is vital. The issues involved here are not peripheral to the experience of students and teachers but at the centre of it. They need to occupy a corresponding place within union activity with all the unions involved formulating policy on these questions and campaigning through all the channels open to them. Often resistance will be stiff. However, with consistent struggle combining discussion, argument and imaginative use of the press (student, academic and local) with appropriate mass action, intransigent authorities would be forced to give way. The last few years has seen some uneven progress arising from struggles of this character, even though the various campaigns have rarely had a strategic direction. The situation could qualitatively alter if the left and radical sections gave serious attention to this arena.

Ideology and Marxism

This would also involve mobilising the resources of the national unions concerned. For example, the National Union of Students has extensive policy on education, yet in the absence of initiatives from local unions its actions have been somewhat limited. There is a certain reticence among some sections of the left to get unions involved in this work because it is seen as 'ideological' and therefore not an appropriate sphere of activity for a mass organisation. This confusion arises only if 'ideological' is equated with 'Marxist', a proposition which fails to recognise that different levels of political struggle have their corresponding, valid, ideological expressions. Our work within trade unions is based on a set of ideas about the common interests of its members which are shared by vast numbers of people who are neither Marxists nor on the left. In our work in the student broad left, Communists share a common outlook on the student movement with our left partners without them being Marxists. To argue this in no way denies the importance of the fight for Marxist ideology and it recognises that the ideological agreement shown in the examples above is partial, although important.

Clarity here is essential, for if ideology is equated with Marxism, then it is impossible to raise the question of the ideological character of education as the responsibility of a mass organisation. That is seen as a question for the Marxist left. Yet any strategy which seeks a system of post-school education that is democratic in its structure, popular in its accessibility and critical in its educational practice must make demands on course content. The campaign here takes place within the overall context of democratisation and thus the appropriate mass demand is for the proper teaching of all major trends of thought within a subject. This is not an ideological question that is the preserve of a few left-wingers: it requires the consideration of all students and staff because a rejuvenation of intellectual life and a

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stimulus to critical study is urgently needed and must form a central platform of the strategy for a democratic system.

Leftist Critics

Leftist critics maintain that this approach is reformist. For examples, leftists often oppose student representation on the grounds that it incorporates students into the ruling apparatus and consequently undermines their ability to take action. Arguments such as these underestimate the power of students and fail to appreciate the potential value of representation if backed by strong union organisation and a clear, political perspective.

Simplification of the struggle at hand and a metaphysical belief in the imminent collapse of 'the system' underpin these leftist criticisms. Above all, their criticisms here reflect their general failure to analyse the character of modern capitalism and adjust their politics accordingly. The enormous expansion in the institutions of 'civil society' and their influence in the exercise of ruling-class hegemony are events that have passed them by. For them, 1917 remains a universal model which can be transplanted into completely different soil. They refuse to recognise that different conditions demand a different strategy, one which recognises that revolutionary change in advanced, industrial, capitalist countries will be a long, uneven process, whose success depends on altering the social relations of the balance of power, drawing ever more support to the democratic and working-class forces and developing constructive alternatives.

Education plays an important part in the securing of bourgeois hegemony, which explains the importance for a clear strategy in this field. The extent to which each reform is not seen as just an end in itself but contributing to a process of fundamental democratisation, and the degree to which this strategy is related to the popular struggles in the country as a whole will determine its contribution to the battle for socialist advance.

Not Spontaneous

The achievement of this strategy will not be a spontaneous affair. The lack of conscious direction so far has been a serious weakness. The Communist Party has a major role to play in rectifying this situation, in ensuring that the issues are raised, the general strategy discussed and in contributing to the maximum campaigning unity in pursuit of these democratic goals.

Concomitant to this is the responsibility for a qualitative extension of our public Marxist work among students and intellectuals, for a marked increase in the grasp of Marxist theory among these strata would weaken bourgeois influence in education and open new possibilities for democratic change. The Communist University of London has been a major initiative in this area. Publication of the best papers presented there in a book collection, in *Marxism Today* and by the Communist Party specialist groups would root this initiative more firmly, as would a proliferation of provincial, mini-Communist Universities. Such publications and events, combined with an extension of the work of the specialist groups, will result in the Communist Party making a profound contribution to Marxist thought and influence in these fields.

Major progress can be made in the next few years on the issues that have been raised here. However, the realisation of these possibilities is dependent on a conscious recognition by all forces on the left of their central importance. This article is a contribution to that recognition. More concrete examples of that recognition will hopefully follow.

CULTURE AND COMMITMENT IN BRITAIN IN THE THIRTIES

Following the Brecht weekend earlier this year, the Party Literature Group is organizing a conference on "Culture and Commitment in Britain in the Thirties", to be held on October 15-17 at the Institute of Education, Bedford Way, London, WC1.

After a General Introduction, the conference will take the form of four plenary sessions, on the Novel, Poetry, Drama and Criticism, which will each be followed by a choice of three seminars. The seminars will be introduced by a speaker, but are intended to ensure maximum opportunity for spontaneous discussion. Among seminar topics are "The Proletarian Novel", "George Orwell", "The Left Book Club", "Poetry and the Spanish Civil War", "Christopher Caudwell", "Agit-Prop and Unity Theatre" and "The Visual Arts". Speakers include James Klugmann, Betty Reid, Margot Heinemann, Jack Lindsay, Arnold Kettle, Ralph Bond (who will introduce an evening of documentary films from the period), Ray Watkinson, André van Gyseghem, Roy Johnson and Chris Pauling.

Tickets are £2. Numbers are limited to 160 by size of main hall. For booking and further details write to: Secretary, Literature Group, 16 King Street, London, WC2. Remaining tickets will be sold at the door before the first session on Friday 15th at 7.30 p.m.

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British Capitalism since the War

Part Two: Decline and Prospects

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Introduction

The first part of this article (*Marxism Today*, September 1976) sought to locate the unique combination of elements which has defined the predicament of British capitalism in the post-war period. Two main propositions were advanced: first, that the working class in Britain has been in a structurally stronger position to defend its interests as an economic class than the working class in the other major advanced capitalist states; second, that the ability and willingness of the British ruling class and its political leadership to renovate the structure and institutions of the British economy in response to the shifting balance of world economic strength were powerfully inhibited by their commitment to preserving the legacy of Britain's imperial past.

This second part of the article brings these propositions to bear on the explanation of the persistent backwardness of the British economy and then reviews the main phases in British capitalism's post-war trajectory.

4. THE BACKWARDNESS OF THE BRITISH ECONOMY

The symptoms of Britain's economic malaise are familiar—falling shares of world export markets, slow rates of growth of output and output per head, both in the economy as a whole, in manufacturing industry and in disaggregated sectors, declining relative consumption levels, and so on. In explaining this syndrome two points should be borne in mind. First, if we consider the post-war period as a whole, British capitalism's record is one of insular success and international failure. Economic growth was faster and more continuous after the war than before, though the improvement was not spectacular. Gross National Product (GNP) per head rose 40 per cent in the period 1950-66 compared with 29 per cent in the equivalent span of years after the First World War from 1920 to 1936. After 1966 the growth rate halved and actually became negative in the crisis of 1974-5. The problem was that this modest improvement over the past fell well short of the performance of the other major capitalist states.

Second, the relative backwardness of British *industry* is not a new phenomenon. There has been a prevailing tendency for industrial productivity to rise more slowly in Britain than in the leading capitalist powers for the past *century*. It is difficult to be precise about this because of the inadequacies of the data and because of the formidable problems of defining and measuring productivity anyway. But the available evidence does suggest at least a tendency towards long term industrial backwardness in Britain. Table 2 opposite reproduces the statistics compiled by E. H. Phelps-Brown[1]. Although it is possible that different causes have operated in different periods to produce the same result, the statistical evidence provides at least a prima facie case for arguing that whatever was responsible for slow growth before the war was also responsible for it after.

The problem with all explanations of growth is that virtually any alleged cause could equally well be an effect. Nevertheless, some common explanations of Britain's slow growth are plainly inadequate. The catching-up hypothesis—the view that the Western European countries and Japan grew rapidly from absolutely lower levels of output and productivity at the end of the war, reflecting lower overall levels of development of the productive forces—fails to explain pre-war experience. It also implies a convergence of growth rates over time, which has not happened. Particular variants of this argument such as the thesis that Japan, France, Italy, and to a lesser extent West Germany, enjoyed once and for all gains not available to Britain as a result of massive transfers of labour from low productivity agriculture to high productivity manufacturing industry are subject to the same objection.

Agricultural Transfer Thesis

The agricultural transfer thesis has been reformulated in dynamic terms. The argument runs that the process of economic restructuring associated

[1] See Sir A. Cairncross (ed.)—*Britain's Economic Prospects Reconsidered* (Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 106.

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Table 2

Five countries, periods between 1871 and 1968: rates of growth, annually compounded, of industrial productivity (net annual real product per operative, employee or occupied person in manufacturing and industry, expressed as per cent).

	France	Germany	Sweden	UK	USA
1871-1913		1.81		1.03	
1892-1913		2.27	2.95	0.84	1.40
1920-1938			5.80		
1924-1937				2.05	
1925-1938		0.26	4.80	1.77	0.40
1948-1967			4.06		
1948-1968	5.35			2.84	3.39
1950-1968		4.89			

Source:
E. H. Phelps-Brown in Sir A. Cairncross—*Britain's Economic Prospects Reconsidered*, Allen and Unwin, 1971, p. 106.

with the contraction of agriculture was compressed in time in these countries, whereas in Britain the same process was spread over a much longer and earlier period. The more rapid release of labour from agriculture enabled a more rapid growth of employment in manufacturing. It is claimed that there is a positive correlation between the pace of industrial growth and the rate of growth of industrial productivity. This may be due to the fact that in a more rapidly expanding manufacturing sector a higher proportion of the fixed capital in use at any given point in time will consist of equipment of more recent and more technically advanced vintages. However the statistical basis of this alleged correlation has been effectively demolished[2]. In any case the inference originally drawn from this argument, that Britain had reached a precocious maturity because of the absence of steady labour migration from agriculture into industry since the war, is unacceptable. It takes no account of the fact that, as we have seen, Britain's slow growth dates from the last century and coincided until 1940 with high rates of unemployment. There could hardly have been a labour supply constraint on growth *before* the Second World War.

Relations of Production within the Labour Process

One hitherto neglected feature of this line of reasoning is worth noting. Under capitalist production relations major internal shifts of labour between sectors and the extensive importation of migrant and immigrant labour will in general tend to reduce the ability of the working class to impose its own conditions and controls within the labour process. (An exception will occur where, as in Britain and the USA since the war, immigrant labour is largely segregated into a narrow sector of the labour market.) With the labour market in a state of flux capitalists in the dynamic sectors will be well placed to enforce those modes of labour deployment, utilisation and discipline, which are needed to maximise the level of labour productivity achieved with any given set of means of production.

In other words, provided that the other conditions necessary for rapid growth are present (i.e. a favourable conjuncture of all the factors which affect the state of capitalists' expectations about the future and of all the factors which act as constraints on growth—labour supply, availability of raw materials etc), what determines how far capital takes advantage of these conditions is the state of the relations of production within the labour process. From this standpoint it was not the greater inelasticity of its labour supply which differentiated British capitalism from its rivals in the post-war period. Rather it was the lesser ability and willingness of the average capitalist enterprise in Britain to subordinate the working class to the requirements of rapid growth whether in introducing technical innovation or in raising and maintaining the intensity of labour with given technical conditions.

It is wrong to separate the process of capital accumulation and technical innovation from the process of managing and transforming the relations of production in the work-place. It is true that in periods of crisis capitalists typically seek to rationalise the labour process (reducing normal manning levels, increasing the flexibility of labour deployment, eliminating bottlenecks, pockets of resistance etc), *without* undertaking any new investment. The success of such rationalisation may be a precondition for a later resumption of accumulation through its effect on the prospective profitability of new invest-

[2] See R. Rowthorn—*What Remains of Kaldor's Law?*, Economic Journal, March 1975.

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ment. But this is merely a separation in time of processes which are not alternatives to each other, but complements.

In reality a major wave of new investment embodying new techniques of production cannot be considered independently of the degree to which capital confronts a labour force which is adaptable and pliable. Capitalists who either fail or, whether from complacency or from anticipation of failure, do not attempt to reorganise and adapt the labour process, will not only experience sub-maximal productivity on existing equipment, but will also be deterred from scrapping and replacing their fixed capital stock.

The Stop-Go Argument

Other common explanations of Britain's slow growth are equally unsatisfactory. There is a widespread belief that Britain's long run growth rate has been pulled down by stop-go. The usual form of this belief is that the uncertainty associated with cyclical fluctuations in demand has inhibited investment, causing the proportion of resources devoted to investment to be lower than if demand had been able or allowed to grow more steadily. It is possible that this has happened in Britain. The ratio of gross fixed capital formation (excluding residential construction) to GDP has been lower in Britain than in most of the other advanced capitalist states (see table 3). But there are serious objections to regarding stop-go as a *major* cause of Britain's slow growth.

First, whatever depressing effects stop-go may have had, it did not prevent the share of investment from rising steadily from 10 per cent in 1950 to 15 per cent in 1966. After 1966 the share levelled off until the mini-boom of 1972-3 when it rose sharply to 17 per cent.

Second, given the low return on investment in Britain, measured in terms of the increment of output per unit of investment, it is not obvious that the major weakness of Britain's investment has been its low *volume*. This question of the productivity of investment is further discussed below.

Third, the extent of cyclical fluctuations in demand and output in Britain has not been large by international standards. Other rapidly growing countries experienced even greater cyclical instability. It may be that in a country which is growing slowly in any case cyclical instability causes more damage than in one which is growing rapidly. But this would still leave the underlying trend unexplained.

Legacy of Imperialism?

Probably the most commonly held view on the British left is that Britain's backwardness is a direct legacy of imperialism. The usual form of this argument is that since the late 19th century when new imperial rivals began to challenge Britain's international dominance, British capital has systematically neglected its domestic productive base. Domestic investment was too largely geared towards patching up and complementing existing facilities instead of scrapping and rebuilding. This defensive response to international competition was encouraged by the availability of a line of retreat into the Empire which provided safe, protected and exclusive markets and outlets for investment.

Table 3

Rates of Growth of GDP at Market Prices and Ratios of Gross Fixed Capital Formation (Excluding Residential Construction) to GDP: Principal OECD Countries, 1961-72, expressed as averages in per cent per annum.

	GDP	Ratio GFCF/GDP
Canada	5.5	17.3
United States	4.4	13.1
Japan	10.1	26.8
Australia	5.4	21.7
Belgium	4.4	16.0
Denmark	4.7	17.0
France	5.8	17.9
West Germany	4.5	19.5
Italy	4.8	14.3
Netherlands	5.6	20.1
Sweden	3.7	17.4
Switzerland	4.0	20.2
UK	2.5	14.7

Source:
OECD—*National Accounts of OECD Countries 1961-72.*

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For the period before the First World War and for the inter-war period this argument is compelling. From 1905 to 1914 British capitalists invested annually about 7 per cent of the national income abroad whilst the share devoted to domestic investment fell to about 5 per cent. The capital assets owned by British citizens abroad rose from £2,400 million in 1900 to £4,000 million by 1914. Britain was transformed into a rentier economy able to balance its payments and maintain the world role of the City and of sterling through the resultant large net inflow of profits, interest and dividends. At the same time productivity growth in UK industry was only half to a third that achieved by Britain's main rivals.

After World War II

It would be tempting simply to ascribe Britain's post-war backwardness to the persistance of this grand imperial design. However, the problem is not so simple. Consider first domestic investment. Table 3 shows clearly that the share of investment in GDP was lower than that achieved in the fast growing capitalist states. It also reveals, however, that, if we leave aside Japan, there was no close association between investment shares and growth rates, and that the discrepancy between Britain and its rivals in terms of the proportion of resources mobilised for investment was not enormous. Thus whereas the UK's growth rate in the period 1961-72 was only 40-50 per cent of that achieved by its rivals, its investment share was between 75-90 per cent of theirs. This conclusion is even stronger if we examine investment in plant and equipment. Table 4 indicates that by far the greatest discrepancy between Britain and other countries lies in the *productivity* of UK investments in plant and equipment. The growth of output per unit of investment was only half that of Britain's major competitors such as France, West Germany and the USA and two-thirds that of Japan, whereas Britain's investment ratio was only marginally lower. It seems reasonable to conclude that the UK's slow growth is not solvable merely by increasing the share of investment in GDP.

Next consider the export of capital. Although capital has been exported on a significant scale from the UK since the war, the *relative* importance of this outflow has been greatly reduced compared with the period before the First World War and with the 1920s. (In the 1930s capital exports virtually dried up.) If we examine the outflow of direct investment overseas by the UK private sector (easily the major category of capital export since the war), and compare it with domestic gross fixed capital formation by the private sector (excluding residential dwellings), which accounts for between 50 and 60 per cent of total investments undertaken by both private and public sectors taken together, the ratio between these two flows in the years 1958-72 averaged 11.5 per cent. (In 1973 and 1974 the ratio soared to 25 per cent and 20 per cent respectively, though part of this rise reflected the depreciation of sterling after it was floated in June 1972.)

Now even if we assume, unrealistically, that *all* of

Table 4
International Comparisons of Investment Productivity

	Change in GDP/ Gross Investment in Plant and Machinery	Plant and Machinery Investment as % of GDP
Canada	0.63	7.9
Belgium	0.59	8.8
Netherlands	0.54	10.5
Italy	0.51	8.4
United States	0.49	9.5
France	0.49	12.0
Switzerland	0.48	9.5
Australia	0.47	10.9
West Germany	0.43	12.4
Denmark	0.42	12.1
Japan	0.32	32.1
UK	0.23	9.5

Source:
NEDC—*Finance for Investment*, Annex A, 1975.
Note:
The growth of output is taken between the years 1967 and 1972 and the investment ratio is the average for the years 1968-72.

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this capital export was an *alternative* to domestic investment, and even if we assume that if capital exports had been prohibited, the capital released would actually have been invested, and that no concomitant change would have taken place in the inflow of foreign investment into the UK, the effect would have been to raise the share of investment in GDP by less than 1 percentage point. In fact, of course, the outflow of private capital from the UK has been increasingly offset by a reverse inflow of foreign capital into the UK. The ratio between *net* private direct investment overseas and domestic gross fixed capital formation averaged only 3.9 per cent in the years 1958-72. In other words it is doubtful whether the international mobility of private capital made any difference whatsoever to the level of domestic investment. The freedom to export and import capital may impair national autonomy, but it cannot be blamed for Britain's low investment ratio, even if this were the major aspect of Britain's problems[3].

Moreover, simple inspection of the behaviour of private overseas investment reveals that the outflow did not reach major proportions until after 1967. After averaging £250 million per year (at current prices) from 1960-1967 the gross outflow more than doubled in the next three years and then trebled again in the next four, to reach £1,540 million in 1974. This timing pattern strongly suggests that capital export has been more a *consequence* of domestic crisis than its cause.

Interdependence of Technical and Class Aspects of Investment

Thus the standard arguments advanced by the left to explain Britain's persistent backwardness will not bear the weight of the evidence. In fact there is at the moment no serious analysis of the issue. Recent fashionable discussion has focused on the phenomenon of "de-industrialisation" and the relative decline of the manufacturing sector. There is, however, little evidence to show that Britain has seriously and systematically "under-invested". The overall proportion of GDP mobilised for fixed capital formation has on average, as we have seen, been somewhat, but not greatly, lower than elsewhere. Nor has it shown any tendency to fall relative to other countries. The argument that Britain has devoted too low a proportion of its investment to "productive" uses, ignores the fact that a fall in "productive" investment relative to investment for "social construction" and, especially, investment in the service industries, has been a common feature of the experience of all the capitalist states outside N. America in recent years (see table 5). Since productivity growth in the tertiary sector is notoriously slow this is a common source of weakness, but it cannot explain Britain's special debility.

This is not to deny that to rehabilitate the British economy would require a major programme of renovatory investment. The point is that modernisation cannot be reduced to a purely quantitative increase in the share of investment or the proportion devoted to manufacturing. The gross dimensions of any plan for restructuring the economy matter less than the specification of priorities and the optimisation of results.

Moreover, the previous discussion has emphasised the interdependence of the technical and class aspects of the investment process. This implies that Britain's backwardness cannot be adequately explained in terms of aggregative economic disproportions, but must be related to the principal class forces which have formed the axes of British

[3] This conclusion ignores hidden capital exports through transfer pricing by multinational companies, but this would have had to be on an astronomical scale to upset the argument.

Table 5
Percentage of Gross Fixed Capital Formation Devoted to Manufacturing Industry: Selected OECD Countries for which comparable data are available, 1961 and 1972.

	1961	1972
Canada	12.4	12.6
United States	15.9	17.0
Japan	32.7	18.5
Australia	17.0	13.7 (1969)
Belgium	26.5	22.4
Denmark	17.2	10.9 (1970)
France	30.7	25.2 (1968)
Sweden	23.2	18.3
UK	26.1	18.8

Source:
OECD, *op. cit.*

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capitalism's post-war development—the imperial inheritance and the defensive strength of the working class.

At least up until the late 1950s habituation to the protection of the Empire and the expectation that this could be perpetuated removed any strong incentive from the average enterprise to overhaul its means and relations of production. The old pattern of defensive investment continued. The relations of production within the workplace remained largely undisturbed except that in the new conditions of full employment and strong union organisation management was forced to aquiesce in shop-floor bargaining over wages and other issues which partially eroded their control over the labour process. But as long as no decisive assault on working class strength seemed necessary the benefits of a successful assault could not be obtained.

Later on as the incentive to tackle both the physical and the class aspects of lagging productivity growth began to make itself felt, the working class interposed a barrier in capital's path. Opposition, actual or anticipated, to technical innovation and work reorganisation which threatened job security and control, restricted the scope for a successful investment and productivity drive. The same defensive strength blocked any major redistribution of incomes against the working class to help shift resources into investments and exports. The longer a resolution of this class stalemate, one way or another, was postponed, the more painful an eventual resolution was bound to be. Thus the failure of the ruling class to extricate the economy from its cumulative retardation was in part a failure of will and in part a failure of ability. Its imperial orientation and the resistance of its main class adversary impaired the resolve and efficacy with which it might have arrested and reversed the process of decline.

5. A SYNOPSIS OF THE POST-WAR PERIOD

We can now draw together the threads of the preceding discussion into an overview of the post-war period. The periodisation adopted corresponds roughly to qualitative changes in the principal co-ordinates of the ruling class's position as given by inter-class and inter-state relationships.

The first phase from 1945 to 1951 is the period of the post-war capitalist settlement. In these years the Labour Governments presided over two crucial sets of strategic decisions. The first concerned Britain's alignment with US imperialism as a means of salvaging British imperial interests. The second involved the simultaneous extension and restriction of the economic role of the state. This was extended through the creation of the welfare state, the nationalisation of industries essential to, but unmanageable by the private sector, and the development of a sophisticated budgetary machine to manage the economy and, in particular, to help realise the objective of maintaining full employment. It was restricted in the sense that nationalisation was strictly limited in scope and purpose and no positive steps were taken to plan economic development in accordance with public priorities.

Thus in this first period Britain was firmly attached to the Western alliance and capitalist social relations were restored to health on the basis of a new politico-economic statute fixing the proper role of state economic management and intervention. With its international and domestic fronts thus secured after the turmoil and almost universal pessimism about the long term future of the capitalist system which followed the defeat of the fascist powers, the British ruling class could with some confidence look forward to the resumption of business as usual both at home and abroad.

Faltering Boom

What the Labour Governments had not done was to provide any mechanisms for ensuring that industrial performance in matters such as the volume, direction and use of investment would suffice to meet the later resurgence of international competition in an increasingly integrated and liberalised world market. Nor had it perfected any substitute mechanism of social control to replace the discipline of mass unemployment. The organised sections of the British working class, already structurally more powerful than their counterparts elsewhere, could now look forward to consolidating and extending their corporate defensive strength in a fully employed economy. With hindsight we can see that the achievements of the post-war settlement laid the basis for the subsequent long boom. Its flaws ensured that the boom would continually falter.

The boom was intermittently restrained by contractionary fiscal and monetary policies designed to assist the loss of foreign exchange reserves and equilibrate the balance of payments by curbing the growth of imports. These deflationary episodes were never, however, severe or long enough to make any lasting impact on the strength of the working class, and failed to grapple with the long term problems of industrial backwardness. Consequently, the balance of payments, a barometer of the ruling class's economic fortunes and an ever present constraint on growth, remained chronically weak.

From the early 1960s onwards the advanced sections of the ruling class's political and ideological leadership came to appreciate that new departures were needed to avert the maturing crisis. The basic elements of a new hegemonic thrust were identified. First the state must assume a more active, engaged role working in close collaboration with private industry. Second Britain's international alignment

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has to be shifted towards the EEC, which ultimately meant abandoning the special relationship with the USA and with it the special position of sterling and the maintenance of a global imperial posture. Third, new institutions were required to contain working class strength. In the labour process management must reassert ascendancy through a thoroughgoing reform of the collective bargaining system, re-organisation of working practices, and the reconstruction of workplace relations. On the wages front the prevailing anarchy unleashed by a regime of permanent full employment combined with administered company pricing, had to be suppressed by means of an incomes policy.

All these lines of advance were followed in the 1960s but were never welded into a coherent drive with sufficient speed and determination. Partly this was because the immediate pressure on the ruling class, whether from within its neo-colonial empire, or from its rivals abroad or from the working class at home, was not yet acute enough to force the pace of change. Partly it was because given the underlying strength of the working class, not yet fully revealed in open combat, the whole process of re-adjustment was particularly intractable and fraught with political risks, which dictated a cautious, piecemeal approach rather than a dramatic assault. The upshot was that the emergent redirection of the early 1960s became swamped by the course of events. The National Plan was sacrificed to the immediate exigencies of the balance of payments. Industrial policy was left floundering with no clear sense of purpose. Negotiations for entry into the EEC were allowed to stall. Incomes policy was turned into an instrument of direct wage repression. New model systems of industrial relations were left on the drawing board. The faltering boom thus gave way to nearly a decade of class deadlock and economic stagnation.

Decade of Deadlock

In the third phase of the post-war period from 1966 to 1975 the average rate of economic growth was halved. Whereas industrial production advanced by 35 per cent in the decade 1955-65 the increase over the next decade was only 15.5 per cent. The go-periods of the stop-go cycle became shorter, the stop periods became longer and were marked by actual drops in industrial production instead of a mere deceleration of growth. The slowing down of actual expansion did not reflect an increasing degree of under-utilised capacity. On the contrary both output and underlying capacity were growing at the same slower rate.

At the same time the rate of growth of productivity, although still low by international standards, was accelerating because of a sustained shake-out of labour from the industrial sector and the first beginnings of rationalisation within the labour processes of British capital. The combination of slower output growth and more rapid productivity growth inevitably produced a substantial fall in industrial employment which declined by 12.5 per cent in the period 1965-74. This expulsion of labour from industry was reflected in an upward trend in unemployment from 1966 onwards, but was cushioned by the rapid expansion of employment in the labour intensive services sector, particularly within state run services, so that overall there was still relatively full employment.

Superimposed on the more sluggish growth of available resources was the aggravation of the three way struggle over their distribution between the state, the employers and the working class. As the state sought to finance spending programmes which in the 1960s were growing some 25 per cent faster than GDP, a new wage-tax spiral intertwined with familiar wage-price spiral to generate a rising rate of inflation. The Heath Government's efforts to control inflation first by open confrontations with the unions and the repressive weapon of the Industrial Relations Act, and then by the restoration of incomes policy, were rebuffed.

The eruption of primary commodity prices in the boom of 1972-73 made it impossible to hold the line on wages against organised working class defiance. In the poised balance of class forces which followed the Conservative Government's defeat it was politically impossible for the Labour Government to re-impose strict money wage regulation immediately or to curb the growth of public spending. As a result the rate of inflation continued to accelerate to a peak of 27 per cent per annum in the summer of 1975. At this juncture with all main economic indicators registering record worsts, the long decline of British capitalism had reached its nadir.

What above all characterised the decade from 1966 to 1975 was that the ruling class was unable decisively to impose a new strategic course on the working class, whilst the working class in turn failed to advance beyond the bounds of corporate defencism to mount an offensive political struggle around a credible alternative economic programme of its own. Such a programme would have needed to fulfil two conditions which were both lacking in the argumentation and propaganda of the left. First the measures it contained would have had to be sufficiently internally coherent to offer some prospect of success if implemented. The central stumbling block here was, to put it crudely, that whereas the ruling class wanted to plan wages whilst leaving the rest of the economy substantially unplanned, the left advocated planning virtually everything except wages. Second, the measures would have had to command sufficient popular support to make them

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serious candidates for implementation. In the circumstances this requirement ruled out all schemes involving large scale extensions of nationalisation, which remained, however, the chief panacea of the left. This fatal gap between immediate defensive struggles to preserve real wages, jobs, conditions and social rights and benefits on the one hand, and the advocacy of socialism as a long term aim on the other, left the way open for leaders of the dominant social bloc to re-assert their control over Britain's beleaguered economy.

6. CURRENT RULING CLASS STRATEGY AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

By comparison with its situation before the intensification of the economic class struggle in the late 1960s the ruling class in the mid 1970s possesses some distinct advantages. First its victory in the EEC Referendum set the seal on British imperialism's new European base. Having finally discarded the constrictions of the old imperial system and the special relationship with the USA, the ruling class is better placed to pursue its world interests along more flexible and opportunist lines than before. One manifestation of this development is the calculating, tactical approach cultivated by the Treasury and the Bank of England towards the exchange rate since sterling was floated in 1972.

Effects of EEC

Second, Britain's membership of the EEC provides a bastion against domestic class pressure for popular and progressive forms of state intervention because the EEC insitutionalises the dominance of market forces over the principle of public planning. It is true that national governments may simply flout EEC rules relating, for instance, to import controls or subsidies to domestic industry. It is also true that the EEC remains an alliance of convenience rather than a genuinely integrated and centralised economic unit. But the net effect of EEC membership is to reduce the apparent feasibility of policies aimed at strengthening national autonomy via state intervention and planning.

This in turn reduces the chances that a government committed to such policies will either attain office in the first place or succeed in implementing them if elected. The general drift of the Labour Government's policy since the left's defeat in the Referendum—the emasculation of the National Enterprise Board, the rejection of state-sponsored planning agreements, the refusal to countenance more than token controls on imports—exemplifies the force of this in-built bias. To follow any strategy other than that of seeking economic redemption through the containment of private consumption and government spending in order to make way for export led growth and a market induced recovery in private investment, would cut against the grain of Britain's commitment to the EEC.

The Use of Fear

Third, the very magnitude of the crisis of 1974-75, especially the heights reached by the rate of inflation, has been turned to good effect. Popular fright at the inflationary menace has been a major factor behind the general acquiescence in the Government's policy for mastering the crisis given the absence of any credible alternative. In the short term at least, all the evidence suggests a lowering of popular material aspirations in line with what is seen as feasible. In the longer term the unions' acceptance of the general principle of a social contract, at least under a Labour Government, represents a new stage in the quest for regulation of the anarchy of distribution under capitalism.

It is unlikely that when the current phase of pay restraint expires in the summer of 1977 the Government will find it possible to engineer further cuts in real wages, and the concertina of pay differentials will almost certainly have to be reopened. But there is far more widespread acceptance now than in the 1960s than an unqualified reversion to laissez-faire wage bargaining is out of the question, and that there must be some permanent institutional means of explicitly co-ordinating the development of money wages with official definitions of national economic objectives and priorities.

Unemployment as Instrument of Policy

Fourth, the post-war commitment to full employment has now been so severely compromised in the interests of combating inflation that it need not constrain ruling class policy with anything like the same force as in the past. Unemployment has clearly become an instrument of policy rather than a target. Moreover, current unemployment cannot be understood in traditional cyclical terms. The upsurge in unemployment in 1975 may have been precipitated by the previous contraction in demand caused by the rise in oil prices, the slump in investment and the deliberate abstention of the Government from full compensatory action to stimulate demand. But what started as a normal response to a slump is becoming

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converted into technological or structural unemployment as employers take advantage of the weakened bargaining power of those who remain in employment to bring about permanent reductions in their planned manning ratios. This rationalisation process has, of course, been in motion since the mid 1960s, but it has received extra impetus from the slump. It means that an economic upturn would not fill all the jobs which have been lost. Output will be raised up to a point by higher productivity from a lower employment base.

In short, what is now envisaged is the maintenance of a permanently higher reserve army of unemployed both to buttress pay policy and to raise productivity in the labour process. Each of these intended effects in turn will clear the ground for an eventual recovery of full capacity working and capital accumulation, first by keeping labour costs low relative to Britain's competitors, second by redistributing income in favour of profits and restoring domestic capitalist confidence, third by breaking resistance to those changes in labour deployment and utilisation which are a precondition for modernising investment in plant and equipment. The extent to which unemployment can be reduced will be determined as a by-product of the anticipated growth of exports and investment. The task of demand management is essentially a residual one. Its aim is to ensure that the claims on resources exerted by the state through its monetary and fiscal policies and by the working class through wage bargaining do not impede exports and investment and spark off another wave of inflationary pressure.

Weakness of the Strategy

It is not inconceivable that this strategy will in its own terms succeed, and that British capitalism will enter the 1980s leaner and fitter than at any time this century. There are, however, two key economic weaknesses. First, the continued uncertainty of the international environment due to common structural problems which constrain potential growth rates in all the major capitalist states, the ever present threat of a renewed upsurge in inflation and the increased bargaining power of some suppliers of primary commodities, make the prospects for a sustained British export boom precarious. Given that there are narrow limits to the scope for increasing British exports and displacing imports through higher market penetration, the growth of British exports must depend mainly on the growth of world trade.

Second, without a fairly comprehensive 'socialisation' of investment under the auspices of the state there is nothing to *guarantee* that the re-equipment and modernisation of British industry will actually take place. Market forces are a very weak instrument for accomplishing the kinds of changes which are needed. The exercise currently being conducted by NEDO of selecting 30 key growth sectors consists of little more than identifying those sectors in which Britain has or could conceivably have a comparative advantage in cost terms vis-a-vis the rest of the world. The institutional means and political will to translate these aims into an actual modernisation programme, on a global scale and not just in particular companies such as British Leyland and British Steel Corporation, are lacking. Moreover even if voluntary capitalist initiative guided by market signals were to inaugurate an investment boom there would still be no direct means for exercising social control over its pace, scale, direction, character, location and consequences.

Visible Cracks

This is as far as a purely economic analysis can go. The wider destiny of British capitalism can only be assessed at the political and ideological levels. Britain's protracted economic crisis since the war has opened up deep fissures within bourgeois hegemony. The cracks are visible for example in the combativeness and confidence of the working class, the detachment of professional strata from their traditional patterns of action and allegiance, the development of new arenas of struggle by women, the burgeoning of extra-Parliamentary politics, the rise of the nationalist movements, the surfacing of a racist and populist ultra-right, the crisis within the Conservative Party leadership and ideology, and the fragmentation of the political party system. The ruling class's economic fortunes will condition and be conditioned by its success in knitting together its fractured system of power.

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Review Article:

Sociology—But not Marxism

David Triesman

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Martin Shaw—"Marxism and Social Science"
Pluto Press, paperback, £1.50

When Daniel Bell, a leading American professor of sociology, announced in 1960 that Ideology was dead, he could hardly have anticipated that the Watts ghetto of Los Angeles would have erupted, that American military power would be stretched beyond its limits in Asia and Latin America by its ideological opponents, and that even his cherished campuses would have exploded, almost before the ink on his pages had dried. Such is the limited predictive ability of much bourgeois social science: even dead Ideology won't lie down.

The importance of Bell's work was that it appeared to confirm the orthodox view in sociology that Western capitalist societies had reached an equilibrium, a self-adjusting state where no further major changes in social structure should be anticipated. It followed that for sociology students, the skills they were required to learn were, first, to analyse how the interrelated parts of a society functioned together so smoothly; and, second, because small disruptions did occur where social 'misfits'—the poor, the black, the perverted and the disruptive—disturbed the functioning of the equilibrium. These mere ripples on an essentially calm lake could be stilled by trained social experts, social mechanics skilled at making the machine run at optimal power.

The Importance of Marxism

It was hardly surprising that 1950's sociology students should have been so closely associated with the ruling order. They became its technicians, working under the general direction of the economic and social ruling class. As Martin Nicolaus, Isaac Deutscher Prize winner, told the American Sociological Association: "This is the type of sociologist who sets the tone of the ethic of the profession, and it is the type of sociologist who is nothing more nor less than a house servant in the corporate establishment, a white intellectual Uncle Tom, not only for this Government and ruling class, but for any government and ruling class."

When it became clear, even to social scientists, that major social conflicts, both domestic and international, were manifestly occurring, that the theory they held relied on wishful thinking rather than science, the prevailing view about equilibrium suffered dramatically. And where social conflict is in evidence, it would be extraordinary if there were no struggle over ideologies among the parties to the conflict. Sociology students, enjoined to be 'value free', inevitably were forced to make their own judgments in the context of open class, racial and sexual struggles. Their daily experience in the study of social structures, institutions and organisations gave them continuous access to the battles over ideas, both held by those they studied or said to account for the phenomena they studied. Pushed consistently in the 1960s against harsh social reality, they frequently entered the disputed arenas as activists.

Because Marxism has a quite unique status in analysing structural reasons for conflict in social, economic, political and cultural order, it has come to enjoy a special influence in sociology departments. It is axiomatic that students must grasp its fundamental propositions. Thus, what is offered to students as 'Marxist sociology' or as a 'Marxist' refutation of bourgeois sociology has a critical importance. Its adequacy will either enhance or retard the intellectual and political development of those who look to it for guidance.

In this light, I want to consider the recent work of International Socialists' activist, and sociology teacher, Martin Shaw, as it appears in his recent book *Marxism and Social Science*. It is widely available and claims to give a definitive theoretical account of the relationship announced in its title.

Vulgar Materialism

Shaw has written a sad, narrow and sectarian book. But for the crises within British society and in the sociology academy, I doubt that it would have commanded attention. In my view, it would be unfortunate if it were influential. The author, one of LSE's school of '68, starts with a reasonably clear statement of objectives, or rather, by saying what his objectives will not be. Thus he will not ask "why such authors [as Talcott

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Parsons] exhibit [conservative] political tendencies", because, as he explains, "the dominant mode of radical criticism is to examine the ideas of various orthodoxies and to establish their philosophical and social assumptions; then to discover in these the traces of a political position". To do this is, he argues, "a hazy enterprise" or a "crude reductionist trap".

Rather, we must ask "what is it in modern capitalist society and its higher-education system which makes such intellectual monstrosities [as Talcott Parsons] possible". That is to say, Shaw regards the internalist method by which theorists in disciplines dispute about the conceptual and empirical adequacy of each other's work solely in terms of the discipline itself, rather than in a wider social context, as an unsatisfactory procedure. It makes no attempt to understand their work in the context of the social conditions in which it was produced.

It follows, then, from the outset, that Shaw has set himself the task of demonstrating a direct relationship between specific features of modern capitalist formation and specific types of social thought. At the same time he rules out as vacuous any consideration of the internal logical coherence of a theory and, most important, whether it is capable of generating scientific knowledge. This position, which excludes explicitly theoretical work, collapses, as it must, into a vulgar form of materialism.

'Internalism'

But even given his limited project, it is curious that the book proceeds without saying anything about the composition of modern capitalism as such. The features which are to be shown to cause certain types of thought are never disclosed. And it becomes inconceivable that he could demonstrate how it nurtures these ideas. We are treated to a scattered, discursive and contradictory commentary: capitalism as we know it is subject to (a) recurrent crises, each worse than the last; and (b) that it is currently founded on an "arms-based economy stable for the last thirty years".

This description of a crisis-torn yet stable system, it will be recognised, has been borrowed from Shaw's IS compatriot, Michael Kidron, a major exponent of the 'State Capitalist' position. Since Shaw has this little to say about modern capitalism, and relies simply on the slogans of a discredited theory for what he does say, it is not surprising that he cannot show how the bourgeois concepts of particular social scientists are 'made possible' by an economic base he cannot specify.

He retreats to the position he warned against—internalism. He attempts to identify the ideological roots of bourgeois social science by counterposing it with another social theory which he calls 'Marxism'. While this should be a more promising start, it is necessary to face another question which this approach prompts: Which Marx is being evoked, and which Marxism?

Which Marx?

This is a legitimate question since the mere use of the name has never guaranteed that different authors have the same original theorist in mind. For example, Henri Lefebvre (*The Sociology of Marx*) invokes Marx the man of Praxis—a man whose thought, even at its most abstract, was never removed from action. Wright Mills, who was relatively unimpressed by Marx's economics, invokes a Marx who thought that all the keys lie in the political sphere. John Bank's Marx (*Marxist Sociology in Action*) was a technician—he provides us with the techniques to intervene meaningfully in modern industrial relations. Sir Isiah Berlin (*Karl Marx*) is perhaps most engaging. His Marx was a man "who although overbearing and offensive in public . . . like a German schoolmaster . . . was a real intellectual with a not unhappy married life—he was warmly attached to his children".

Thus we have become used to these anecdotal renderings of 'Marx', and we invariably find that they are drawn from highly selective and eclectic readings of his work. What is selected turns out to be far more important as a guide to the ideological stance of his interpreters than a reliable discussion of his scientific socialism. Shaw's Marx, despite the title of the book, is almost absent. In as much as he contributes anything, it is very largely drawn from the joint work with Engels—*The German Ideology*, and his own *Theses on Feuerbach*, with a scattering of unreferenced ideas which appear to me to come from the *1844 Manuscripts*. Despite repeated mention of political economy, *Capital* hardly appears other than in its confused interpretation by Kidron.

Exploitation and Technological Progress

These inexplicit formulations on economic relations, which were to have been the basis of Shaw's demonstration of the flaws in bourgeois social thought, make no use of concepts central to Marxism—the Labour Theory of Value and mode of production—although he seems to believe that thought is produced in exactly the same way as other commodities. Even more strikingly non-Marxist, he advances the proposition that technological development in the means of production, including the production of "thought-commodities", is always inherently retrograde—"The growth of machinery *is* the growth of exploitation". This is not qualified by appending

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"under capitalism" where it underpins relative surplus value extraction, for he simply identifies technological advance with exploitation—"Science and technology appear in general within the modern process of production as a means of enhancing capital at the expense of labour".

Quite apart from the vagueness of the terms used, it can only mean that exploitation is a characteristic of technical advance, rather than of specific relations of ownership. It would follow that the movement towards freedom from exploitation would follow the decline of technical, productive ability! His purpose in pursuing this line is, of course, to show that all advanced technology countries are either capitalist or state capitalist.

Since Shaw is unwilling to counterpose a Marxism based on the central features of Marx's work, he is reduced to comparing various sociological positions with what he calls "Marxist theory in a general sense", an expression which I must acknowledge I cannot understand. All he can say of it is that it is not "economist" nor "Stalinist". It requires "the restoration of the *basic* definition of Marxism as a theory of workers' self-emancipation. It requires, too, a definite critique, historical and theoretical of all the practical and theoretical forms in which Marxism has been emptied of this content". Such steps are especially necessary in order to combat Marxist "orthodoxy representing the private interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy by which we mean, of course, their specific class, i.e. collective, interests resulting from the social relations of production, not chiefly their personal or consumption demands".

Shaw's "Theory of Consciousness"

Since he has little coherent to say about what he takes Marxism, as a science, to be, we must necessarily reconstruct from Shaw's selection of citations. The theory most highly valued by him is Lukacs' "critique of bourgeois thought [which] centres around the problem of reification". Thus his selections of ideas come from the "course central to Marx's thought from the *1844 Manuscripts* to the crucial fourth section of Capter 1 of *Capital*". Here we have it. Shaw has identified his project the *self-emancipation* by the workers from *reification*, from the process by which events or artifacts come to appear to have an existence autonomous of their producers. This phenomenon impedes the self-activity that would achieve emancipation, since the role of the worker in the productive process isn't grasped by the worker. In short, he or she is subject to *false consciousness*.

The chief characteristic of this position is that it has no need for the Labour Theory of Value, which is why it doesn't appear. What Shaw believes we need is a Theory of Consciousness to form the main infrastructure of Marxism. Everything else in the book falls simply into place.

(A) The basic structure of society is an economic foundation which gives rise to a complex superstructure, within which is social scientific thought. Because the base is bourgeois, the social science reflecting it is bourgeois. Of course, this mechanical, and hardly original, formulation says nothing whatever about the means by which the base/superstructure relationship operates, or what the mediations between them are. The proposed relationship is a one-to-one correspondence in Shaw's view, and bourgeois thought, especially where it expresses itself in a radical manner, or where elements of it are genuinely progressive, perpetuate false consciousness. Social scientists are paid by either the state or business to maintain false consciousness.

There are a number of unsatisfactory features in this argument, aside from the quite unrealistic status it gives social scientists as principal leaders in the realm of ideas. It is consistent with the Trotskyist view that great strategic importance has to be attached to the ideas of leaders (who then either lead correctly or 'betray' in the classical formula). Shaw argues that academic research papers are simply commodities, to be bought and sold in a market structure, and the corruption of those who write them can be seen if one notes that at a conference held in 1972 of behavioural scientists it was opened by Conservative Peter Walker and addressed by the Countess of Dartmouth. For some reason, that is supposed to provide conclusive evidence of the roguery of social scientists. Equally, all research is suspect since Shaw discovers that it is controlled by those who pay for it and, moreover, it is to be identified with Taylorism—the work-study methods that helped make Henry Ford so powerful a manufacturer. Even collecting complex data on computers is evidence of the chicanery of the sociologist.

(B) The social sciences are divided into autonomous disciplines, thus reflecting an increasing division of labour in the economic base. The division of labour produces reification, and so each autonomous discipline is a reification of an aspect of society. Because they work in this reified atmosphere, the practitioners are also, presumably, labouring under false consciousness. Indeed, Shaw says they are "crippled" by it and cannot grasp "existence as a whole".

Critique of Althusser

Here again, essential issues are absent. Apart from giving no account of how social scientists (I

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take it including Shaw) who manage to produce "Marxist" work, or students who survive as, or become, Marxists, manage to avoid crippling intellectual disablement, there is no way that this argument can suggest how a scientific materialist programme might unite these reified disciplines. On the contrary, there is savage criticism of one theorist who shows that such a theoretical project is essential—Louis Althusser.

Althusser's faults are, we are told, that he was produced in a Stalinist period in a Stalinist party—the French Communist Party; that he has attacked Trotskyists and liberal theorists; that he "divorces marxism from human need" and shows the historical necessity for communism in contrast to "human freedom"; that his "anti-humanism" is so great that it would have even justified the Hungarian invasion of 1956; that he objects to people having a political practice; and that his work has given rise to "no development of Marxist political economy".

Despite this list of what Shaw regards as crimes against socialism and humanity, Althusser has taken seriously exactly the questions glossed over by Shaw in his base/superstructure argument. He has shown the scientific content of the relational terms which appear in the *1859 Preface* to *A Contribution to A Critique of Political Economy* as non-mechanical, non-deterministic. He has developed the concept of complex totality, of dominant moments, of determination in the last instant, and of overdetermination, all of which help to provide a basis for understanding relations between the mode of production and contradictions that occur in relation to it. He does so because he takes seriously Marx's precise formulations, and he assists in opposing crude reductions like the simple correspondence of intellectual production to the economy.

Two Misleading Arguments

Shaw is concerned, then, to make out two entirely misleading cases for students of social science. Firstly, because bourgeois thought is paid for by bourgeois capital it is simply and characteristically conservative. Because it is often controlled by the state, it is characteristically social democrat. That there may not be complete correspondence between the two terms is not noticed by Shaw.

Secondly, Lukacs stresses, following Marx, that commodities extend beyond what is usually understood by the term to include what Shaw calls "pseudo-commodities". Marx, for example, referred to the sale for money of conscience and honour. It is on this peg that Shaw hangs his argument that academic papers may be regarded as commodities, though he includes all those occasions when no money is transacted, when market relations are absent; in short, when the conditions Marx insists on are not there.

The purpose for these two arguments is that Shaw is concerned to show the student who reads his book that there is a monocausal relationship between base and superstructure such that the capitalist epoch cannot give rise to anything other than reactionary thought. Thus those employed in intellectual work are only to be seen in the roles of the reactionaries. The point of making out this whole case is that he is showing us that only progressive thought can occur where proletarians think it. "The proletariat," he concludes, "[has the] ability to transcend the classical dilemmas of modern bourgeois thinking." This position is thoroughly *ouvrierist*. It means that struggle in the superstructure is completely irrelevant and that only economic struggle at the base is acceptable. Struggle over ideas is just so much wasted time. And, equally, the position is thoroughly moralistic. Intellectuals—especially of the type that have heard Lady Dartmouth speak—are uniformly corrupt.

Needless to say, his position on state capitalism means that the same *ouvrierism* and moralism must be applied to socialist countries, since their intellectuals too are incapable of progressive thought.

A Prescription for Pessimism

But progressive ideas are not absent everywhere. They have a residual and pure life. Shaw discovers the tiny flicker of hope in a small group of Marxists. It is the International Socialists who, despite small errors, "alone of all the revolutionary tendencies have accomplished a fairly full emancipation of marxist theory from the deformations of the stalinist period". Thus it is the IS (qua Party) that will provide true consciousness for the misled masses and it will do so exclusively at the base.

I have no doubt that some people who read this review may feel that so harsh an attack ought itself to be viewed as sectarian. I am concerned to be this critical precisely because Shaw's work will have two effects if it isn't challenged—effects generated by the form of his arguments and their outcome in orthodox Trotskyism. They could, on the one hand, be enormously divisive in the sphere of ideological struggle, where critical exchange is to be welcomed, but where denunciation of all those engaged in that struggle can only impede it. On the other hand, the only conclusion a student reading *Marxism and Social Science* could draw is that further study is without point. It is a double prescription for pessimism and intellectual inactivity.

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Discussion Contributions on:

Socialist Democracy : Some Problems

Les Howey

John Gollan's critique of Socialist democracy must surely be an important guide to an understanding of our present situation, whatever new unanswered questions it may engender.

After all, it produced quite a flurry in the media for a few days; Jimmy Reid, we are told, thought highly of it and George Brown was deeply moved by Solzhenitsyn, who appears to be an inescapable component of this and any other appraisal of the Soviet scene.

Cult of the Individual

A vast amount of material is encompassed, a great many facts and assertions offered, yet there is a curious lack of the inside perception that a leading active participant in many of the events covered, might care to offer a new generation.

For example, the cult of the individual is treated as if it were uniquely a Soviet phenomenon. (And the Webbs in "Soviet Communism" 1934, showed considerable insight in how it came about.)

Had the Soviet people succeeded in the span of two decades of recovering from the utter devastation of the Civil War and foreign intervention (costing the British taxpayer alone, £100 million), building a modern Socialist society in not the most promising one-sixth of the world's surface, capable of annihilating the most powerful military the world has ever seen, in conditions of full Socialist democracy and legality—that would indeed have been an achievement.

But we have to come to terms with reality as it is, not measured by the norms of a century and half of bourgeois legality and in this sense the era has been fairly well documented.

Whatever else needs to be published can best be left to the judgement of the Soviet people, when the wounds have had time to heal.

However, there seems to be no reason we should not be enlightened how our own EC of that time (which included Gollan) came to embrace the cult with such fervour—ecstatic study of the Short History of CPSU (B) national campaign around Stalin's 70th birthday, the hundreds of meetings called to mourn his death and so on.

The instincts of surviving Soviet leaders are understandable. Did our own and the leaders of the fraternal parties feel themselves threatened too, even when "some leaders of foreign Communist Parties, then resident in Moscow were amongst those struck down"?

Perhaps the greatest virtue of the essay lies in the new avenues of research opening up.

Clash with Yugoslavia

On page 26 we learn that "The clash with Yugoslavia 'arose out of Yugoslavia's assertion of its independent right to develop Socialism in its own way'" and a few lines later, almost as an afterthought, "Our Party along with others wrongly supported the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform".

But this is scarcely adequate, even in a work of such disciplined economy, to convey the sense of trauma that gripped us all in those days.

As the present editor of *Marxism Today* elaborated in "Trotsky to Tito", commissioned by the EC (study guide and all), the criticisms were rather more far reaching.

The first critical point "They were putting forward a theory of a smooth peaceful transition to Socialism in the style and tradition of the Mensheviks and of Ramsay McDonald", we can pass over with a wry smile.

But others, like the denial of the leading role of the Party and its virtual dissolution with the Popular Front could be seen by all who visited the country.

Nor did the bombastic speeches of some leaders denigrating other emergent Peoples Democracies endear them to many.

Kardelj in April 1948, "In our country the days of the last remnants of the exploitation of man by man are numbered"—a situation that still has to be gained nearly three decades later.

All this might have been seen as the exuberance of a brave and audacious partisan movement that had achieved victory at a terrible price.

But no. In Chapter 2 we learn that "the dangerous situation developing in the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party was not due to mere political errors, to a mistaken policy but that it was the result

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of a deliberate counter revolutionary anti-communist plot carried out by a gang of police informers, agent provocateurs and intelligence agents centred around the leading Tito-ites".

Names are named. "Behind the Hungarian and Bulgarian conspirators stood the criminal group of Titoite leaders. Tito himself, Rankovic, Kardelj, Djilas and some scores of others and behind them the real directors of the plots, British and American Intelligence, British and American imperialism".

Even the military strategy of the Partisan war, which pinned down 17 German divisions and resulted in the death of one seventh of the entire population is compared unfavourably with the struggle in Bulgaria.

Many of us, then young and politically inexperienced who had encountered Yugoslav Partisans during the war or who worked in the Brigades on the Autoput found these facts unpalatable.

But we mostly came to accept them. After all, was not James the expert? Had he not been a staff officer with UNRRA in Belgrade, pre-war international student leader? Did they not come with all the authority of the EC?

Surely the leaders of those days still spared to us, owe it to history to tell all now?

The Regime in China

The harsh strictures, the imperatives for all the facts change dramatically when Gollan turns his attention, briefly, to the warlord regime in China.

No mention here of the gross interference in the affairs of every Communist Party of the world during the 1960s.

No comment on the obstruction of military supplies for Vietnam, nor on the support for every reactionary regime from Pakistan to Pinochet, arms for South Africa's puppets in Angola, the exhumation of the Nixon corpse?

An Odd Contradiction

Not to worry though, There are more acute problems requiring attention—like the handling of minority views, in Russia naturally.

Here as everyone, especially delegates to our own Congress knows, we are uniquely equipped to teach everyone how best to conduct their affairs in such matters.

Yet, now we come up against an odd contradiction.

Recently the *Morning Star* has sustained an effective campaign against the freedom of the British Campaign to Stop Immigration, to project its policy via BBC TV.

Yet Gollan insists that the Soviet public must receive Sakharov's views, that the US should have completed its policy of bombing Vietnam back into the Stone Age, and Solzhenitzyn's stern admonition to the west that "in Angola you have handed over to a gang of puppets".

Might it not be appropriate to seek the feelings of the Soviet public about the propagation of views so repulsively anti-human?

From what theoretical source has Gollan drawn his belief that the media of a socialist society must give access to racists and fascists?

Presumably next to come under censure will be the ICFTU and the European Trade Union Confederation for their joint statements on Solzhenitzyn, reported in the *Morning Star*—"In his exaltation of the Franco regime and his advice to the people of Spain to curb the process of democratision . . .".

Or perhaps I have missed the point? Madrid TV has the required liberal policy, Moscow TV has not?

Why this Discussion?

So even after a third and fourth reading, the insistent question remains, Why?

Politicians write political theses for political reasons in particular political situations.

It cannot be a move in the current anthing-you-can-do-we-can-do-better exercise, because we simply are not in that league and nobody is going to be tempted to a historic compromise here, whatever the bait.

Are the final revelations of the Stalin era expected to unleash further dynamic advances in Southern Africa, S E Asia, Latin America?

Incomplete evidence seems to suggest that the peoples of those parts, recently or presently liberating themselves with Soviet military, economic and other fraternal aid are not too dissatisfied with Soviet performance in "this terrible 20th century".

They are perhaps too conscious of the horrors of imperialism to be obsessed with past deformations of Soviet society and are content to leave it to those most concerned to complete the process of correction.

Perhaps then we should look nearer home for a motive.

The span of John Gollan's General Secretaryship was one continuous retreat for the Party, numerical strength, circulation of the *Morning Star* and other publications have all shown a massive decline.

A quarter of a century after the publication of the *British Road to Socialism* there is not a Parliamentary constituency where we can save a deposit. In the dwindling number of local contests there are only a handful where we poll more than a derisive vote.

Might it not be tempting to place the main burden of responsibility for this situation other than where it really belongs?

Hopefully, the discussion may offer some answers.

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Digby Jacks

John Gollan's article is to be welcomed. It will particularly assist younger comrades, those not having had the experience of former years, in their party work. Hitherto we have not had very much to go on—dusty documents and the personal reminiscences of older comrades. This has obliged us to give undue credence to bourgeois and trotskyist ideas of the nature and history of the Soviet Union and the international communist movement. Not having the facts readily available has weakened our position.

Why This Discussion?

A number of propositions are put forward by those who oppose this discussion taking place; that it is muckraking, irrelevant to the needs of the British party at this time, part of or a concession towards the general ideological counter-offensive against the Soviet Union and the socialist countries or an interference in the affairs of brother parties (and therefore contrary to the principles of past world conferences of communist parties). I cannot give these points much weight either because they are untrue or because it is much more important for us to have a balanced historical assessment of the international communist movement and the Soviet Union in particular. In addition, we must favour open debate on these questions. The problems of the CPSU at various stages in its history have been of direct concern to other communist parties. For several decades the CPSU played a vital role in building up the strength of fraternal parties whilst in return they provided invaluable solidarity to the Soviet state at a time when it was much weaker than now. But above all else the principle of criticism and self criticism must be the yardstick. The CPSU's role is without equal, for 30 years the only party to exercise state power. It achieved so much so heroically—in a most hostile context. Yet the mistakes made are correspondingly greater in their significance, and were in their effect at the time.

This discussion is important for us because it will help to clarify the question of the relationship between the Party, other political organisations, the state and the mass movement. In essence this must be political. The Party's leadership must rest on its tactical sense, calibre and organisation of cadres and the demonstrated leading capacity of Marxist ideas and our programme. Both now, during and after a socialist revolution left unity must mean a commitment not to seek to control or dominate the movement. Our capacity to lead and the suitability of our politics has to be demonstrated, fought for, won and re-won. We can never assume that we have a right to leadership simply because our politics are as they are.

Criticism and Self-Criticism

It is helpful for us to be able to draw on the rich experience of the communist parties that exercise state power, the CPSU especially. Yet our assessments must involve an element of self criticism too. Our party positively supported the practices that are now attacked. I find it difficult to imagine how, for example, Harry Pollitt could write in 1947 (*Looking Ahead*, p. 42) ". . . all I knew was that the workers had conquered, were the top dogs somewhere in the world. That was enough for me. These were the lads and lasses I must support through thick and thin. And don't drop dead with fright *when I say that for me these same people could never do, nor ever can do, any wrong against the working class*". (my emphasis) What is clear from Gollan's article is that there was some information available about the purges, and certainly not just from sources that were to be suspected. Why did we keep quiet then? I don't think it is tenable to say that we didn't know and that what happened in 1956 was literally a bombshell from the blue. The only legitimate reason for the previous silence can be that to raise the voice of criticism would have weakened the already vulnerable position of the Soviet Union. But in retrospect it is necessary to ask whether this was enough.

We rightly criticise the Soviet Party for not fully examining and assessing its own history. Yet we have no adequate history of our own Party. James Klugmann's two volumes go no further than the General Strike; a biography of Pollitt will shortly be published and some other works are fairly readily available. Yet the critical period for the international communist movement covered by John Gollan's article is poorly documented. The Party in effect says at the moment to those comrades interested in our history that they must be professional historians and study all the original documents and arrive at their own individual conclusions. Just as we can learn from the experience of the socialist countries so we must learn from our own history. Indeed, perforce, some of the historical questions unanswered in John Gollan's article would, I consider, have new light thrown on them by looking at what we were doing and saying at the time.

Brezhnev in his opening report to the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union referring to the need for unity in working class movements and the struggle against right and left opportunism stated "and we can say with assurance . . . a concession to opportunism may sometimes yield some temporary advantage, but it will ultimately be damaging to the Party" (*Morning Star*, February 25, 1976).

This will be widely interpreted as a criticism of the

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stance taken by a number of Western European communist parties on the handling of dissent in the Soviet Union. I think he is wrong. To raise legitimate and fraternal criticism (and to receive it in return) is indispensable to a communist party and the communist parties internationally. Yet Brezhnev will be right if the standard by which we judge our commitment to socialist democracy is the extent by which we are prepared to make anti-Soviet statements; the one sentence praising achievements followed by paragraph after paragraph dealing with this or that individual. We must always guard against anti-Sovietism for it is the thin end of the wedge of anti-communism. It is not anti-Soviet to raise fraternal criticisms. It is so to do nothing else and make no objective assessment of the achievements of the socialist countries and the Soviet Union.

Dave Wynn is right to say "that our Party must be open and honest about mistakes made in the socialist countries if we are to convince people here that we mean what we say about freedom and democracy under socialism" (*Morning Star*, January 29, 1976). As Gollan describes many of these mistakes are to be attributed to a hostile international environment, cultural backwardness and the need to industralise and reform agriculture at breakneck speed. We need to explain these points fully. And in so doing we must not delude people into thinking that all they have to do to get socialism, even in the relatively favourable conditions of Britain, is to vote for it.

Danger of Sectarianism

I don't think John Gollan's article puts enough emphasis on the sectarian character of many of the errors and mistakes made. Many of the features of leftism and sectarianism we see amongst trotskyists and their ilk—undemocratic practice in mass organisations, absence of internal democracy, voluntarism, placing the party above the class, a hostile and suspicious attitude towards others on the left, a dogmatic attitude towards Marxist principle etc., were exhibited at that time. For me this is the main lesson to be learnt from what John Gollan writes (see also Gyorgy Aczel's *Culture and Socialist Democracy*, Lawrence and Wishart 1975). Contempt for the masses, fear of democratic and open practices, unwillingness to work in a mass and imaginative way, priority being given to inner party squabbling can occur by both design and default. It is the sectarian approach which we must always set ourselves against.

One final point—the debate has been started and it will in all probability assist us in the reformulation of our programme. This must not be the only conclusion.

A communist debate, once opened, must always be concluded, even if certain aspects are left open. Unless this is done in this journal I fear that we may end up more divided than united. Though perhaps better informed, we may not be able to function better in a communist manner.

Monty Johnstone

John Gollan has performed a valuable service in opening up the debate on Socialist democracy. This enables us collectively to apply Marxism to a vital sphere in which our justified enthusiasm for the great achievements of the Socialist countries for too long inhibited us from undertaking a balanced scientific analysis of them.

Participation

Dorothy Friedmann (February, p. 104) dismisses as "subjective" John Gollan's statement that "the still greater involvement of the people in decision-making is the major issue." But she fails to offer an objective assessment of the character and effectiveness in the Soviet Union today of such participation, by which Marx and Lenin measured the superiority of Socialist over bourgeois democracy. To evaluate how far this potential is actually realised, the impressive figures of the millions of Soviet citizens taking part in the discussions on the economic plans and on some of the draft laws are inadequate.

If *quantitative* indices were the measure of Soviet democracy, we would have to conclude that it had reached its peak in 1936, when it was claimed that 51.5 million people, or 55 per cent of the adult population, participated in discussing the "Stalin" Constitution and sent in 154,000 suggestions and amendments. However, the Twentieth Congress revealed that precisely that period saw "the accumulation of immense and limitless power" in Stalin's hands and the launching of "mass terror" which made political participation a hollow charade. We have therefore to apply *qualitative* criteria, probing the extent to which participation is effective in determining the main lines of national and foreign policy, as opposed to merely approving and implementing policies worked out behind closed doors at the top.

A look at the discussions featured in the Soviet press in the last ten years shows that they have produced very few substantial changes in the main proposals drawn up by the leadership (no doubt after considerable consultation with experts). Contributions normally centre around questions of detail and how best to help achieve the proposed planning objectives and overcome difficulties in

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particular areas and enterprises. All this is obviously extremely important and shows features of a higher form of democracy than is conceivable under capitalism. But the effective exercise of power by the working people means more than this.

Unfortunately it is impossible to find any instance in recent times either in the Soviet press, in the Supreme Soviet or at a Party or trade union congress of any major issue of national or foreign policy on which the government or Party leadership has been opposed or any alternative argued for and voted on. On the contrary, all votes have been unanimous. However, we know that since 1953 intense and fundamental debates have gone on in the Party leadership—but the ordinary Soviet citizens have never been involved in, or even informed of them, until after they have resulted in the removal of those ultimately finding themselves in a minority.

Public Opinion

In his book on Public Opinion in Soviet Society, published in Moscow in 1963, Comrade A. K. Uledov cites the Central Committee decision of November 1962 to divide the Party into industrial and agricultural organisations as an example of how public opinion asserts itself. "The formation of a public opinion in favour of a reorganisation . . . began long before the November plenum", he claims. The discussion at public meetings following the Central Committee decision "proved that the broad masses of working people appreciated and approved the reorganisation of the Party leadership as the concern of the whole people," he continues. "This testifies to the unity between the Party and the people and shows that the Party's opinion develops into the people's opinion."[1]

This reorganisation overrode the Party Rules which had been adopted unanimously at the Twenty-Second Congress only a year previously. No public mention was however made of this fact till November 1964 when the same Central Committee, following Khrushchev's replacement by Brezhnev, decided to accept the Presidium's proposals to return to the Rules and reunify the Party organisations within a month as well as proceeding to the "restoration of united Soviet organs."[2] No one from among "the broad masses of the working people" who had "appreciated and approved the reorganisation" two years before was given the chance in the press or in the Soviets publicly to question its being set aside.

The development of an independent public opinion in the Soviet Union is inhibited, though by no means entirely eliminated, by the ban on the free public exchange of ideas on the most controversial questions and is only able to make itself felt through indirect pressures. The "complete and unanimous approval" that the leadership claims for all its policies and activities[3] appears to be a largely ritualistic formality serving as a barrier to the crystallisation and expression of a genuine public opinion and to real political participation.

Discussion of Laws

The nation-wide discussion of draft laws to which John Gollan refers is of considerable importance and has played a very positive role in the working out of legislation on education, pensions, family and marriage as in the field of labour and industrial law.

Soviet citizens are however faced with restrictions on the expression of opposition to the government on "sensitive" political legislation. This can be seen most clearly in the case of the addition in 1966 of Articles 190(1) and 190(3) to the Criminal Code of the RSFSR fixing penalties for "slandering the Soviet state and social system" and for "group actions which violate public order". No public debate was allowed on these. Indeed in 1967 Bukovsky and two others were charged under the new legislation 190(3) precisely for using their constitutional right to demonstrate for its repeal. The court found them guilty, accepting the prosecutor's contention that their "violation of public order" was "gross because of its impudence—impudence is shown by the fact that they criticised existing laws and the activities of the security services, thereby undermining their authority."[4]

We face here the contrast—normal under bourgeois democracy but alien to socialism—between *formal* constitutional rights and the *real* possibility of exercising them. What is the use of Article 125 of the Soviet Constitution, guaranteeing freedom of speech, street demonstrations etc., if demonstrations against any official policy, proposal or activity are punishable as gross violations of public order and criminal slander on the state?

Kenneth Brinson (April, p. 132) tells us that dissidents are punished only "for involvement in active, subversive agitations aimed against the Soviet state and socialism." Yet amongst those sentenced to years of imprisonment or exile for "slandering the Soviet state and social system" were those who demonstrated on Red Square on August 25, 1968, against the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Their position was the same as that of a substantial number of the world's Communist Parties, including our own, which the CPSU certainly does not see as hostile to the Soviet state and socialism.

[1] A. K. Uledov, *Die Oeffentliche Meinung* (Berlin, GDR, 1964), pp. 69-70.

[2] *Pravda*, November 17, 1964.

[3] See Brezhnev, *Report to XXV CPSU Congress*, pp. 78, 106.

[4] P. Litvinov, *The Demonstration in Pushkin Square* (London, 1969), p. 77.

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Restricting Information

The restrictive and paternalistic attitude adopted by the Soviet press to the publication of information and views considered "unsuitable" for the Soviet public imposes a serious limitation on democracy. Lenin insisted that different points of view should be studied "from the most exact, printed documents that can be verified from all sides. Whoever takes someone's word for things is a hopeless idiot."[5] Yet this is what ordinary Soviet citizens and the mass of Party members were expected to do in 1968 on so crucial an issue as Czechoslovakia. Not a single Soviet paper published a word of the detailed reply of the Czechoslovak Party to the charges made by Brezhnev, Ulbricht, Gomulka etc. in July 1968 in their "Warsaw Letter", which was published in full in Czechoslovakia. Nor would *Pravda* publish a correction to the untrue statement of the Soviet UN representative on August 21 that Warsaw Pact troops had been invited into Czechoslovakia by its government—certainly an example of "sanctioning misinformation"!

Socialist State—a Necessary Evil

Disregarding the revelations of the Twentieth Congress and much subsequent experience, John Tarver (July) denies any connection between "certain rights wrested by the people in struggle with a hostile state machine" under capitalism and the problem of democracy under socialism, where the state is at all times the "greatest instrument for democratisation," "the best friend of the people". This is supposed to be in keeping with "what Marx and Lenin taught."

A reading of Lenin's *State and Revolution*, however, shows that the great classical Marxists, even without the experience that we now possess, had a dialectical appreciation of the dual character of the Socialist state with its contradictory democratic and undemocratic features. Lenin quotes Engels' attack on all "superstitious reverence for the state" which "at best is an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy . . . until a generation reared in new, free social conditions is able to discard the entire lumber of the state."[6] Whilst appreciating the need for the state in building socialism, Lenin stressed "the Socialist criticism of every state in general" and insisted that "every state is *non*-free and *non*-popular", since it represents a "special coercive force".[7]

It was precisely his recognition of the *bureaucratic* and *alienating* characteristics of even a Socialist state that led him to oppose Trotsky's "abstract" theses calling for the incorporation of the trade unions into the state on the grounds that, as both represented the working class, their interests must be identical. Lenin, who had come to see the Soviet state as a "workers' state with bureaucratic distortions"[8], argued that the workers' organisations had "to protect the workers from their state."[9]

This conception is in essence pluralistic. It acknowledges differences of interest and outlook which, if not catered for and allowed independent institutional expression, can lead to the steamrollering of the interests of the working people by their own state.

The building of socialism entails a big increase in the size and scope of the state as a result of the taking of the means of production into social ownership, of which state ownership will be for a long time the central, though by no means the only form. Correspondingly strong countervailing forces will be needed to hold it in check. The pressures towards bureaucracy are certainly accentuated by conditions of backwardness like those in which the Soviet Union, China etc. were forced to undertake the building of socialism. But a critical appraisal of their experience, both positive and negative, is also important for us. We would ignore at our peril the bureaucratic and technocratic tendencies in the state, as well as in governing parties and social organisations, that will need to be combated when socialism is being built in advanced industrial countries like Britain. The great lesson from the Stalin era is that power corrupts if not subject to popular control.

Johnny Tarver notwithstanding, there is a close connection between the democratic rights won by the working people under capitalism and the quality of the democracy that we shall enjoy under socialism, where they must be preserved and extended. Socialist democracy will demand *both* a more democratic state apparatus *and* the existence of a plurality of strong, democratic organisations and newspapers *independent* of that apparatus. They should be constantly involved in helping to hammer out public policy and ready at all times to mobilise public opinion against any move—in whatever guise—towards the concentration of effective decision-making in the hands of a restricted group of leaders, officials or experts. Genuine choice between different political alternatives needs to be ensured as it was in the early days of Soviet power whose superiority, Lenin insisted in 1918, lay in the fact that "if the working people are dissatisfied with their party they can elect other delegates, hand power to another party and change the government without any revolution at all."[10]

[5] Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy* (Moscow, 1963), Vol. 42, p. 235.
[6] Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 453.
[7] Lenin, *Gosudarstvo i Revoliutsia* (Moscow, 1969), p. 29. Emphasis in original.
[8] *C.W.*, 32, p. 48.
[9] *ibid.*, p. 25.
[10] *C.W.*, 26, p. 498.

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